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A SCOTCH COMMUNION SUNDAY AND DISCOURSES

BY THE AUTHOR OF
'THE RECREATIONS
OF A COUNTRY PARSON'

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CONTENTS.

A SCOTCH COMMUNION SUNDAY.

	PAGES
PSALMS, PRAYERS, AND LESSONS ..	1—19
THE ACTION-SERMON	20—42
THE FENCING OF THE TABLES ..	46—59
THE FIRST TABLE-SERVICE	61—76
THE SECOND „ „	77—85
THE THIRD „ „	86—101
THE FOURTH „ „	102—109
THE CONCLUDING ADDRESS .. .	110—121
THE INTERCESSORY PRAYERS ..	121—126

THE EVENING SERVICE.

	PAGES
HYMNS, PRAYERS, AND LESSONS ..	128—151
THE EVENING-SERMON	152—177
THE CLOSING HYMNS AND PRAYERS ..	177—183

DISCOURSES.

		PAGE
I.	AN ACT OF SELF-EXAMINATION ..	187
II.	ON CHRISTMAS-DAY	213
III.	DEBATABLE QUESTIONS	227
IV.	THE FOLLY OF SIN	255
V.	GOD KNOWS	281
VI.	THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS	307

A

SCOTCH COMMUNION SUNDAY.

The Congregation being assembled, the Service is begun by singing to the praise of God.

Psalm XLIII.



SEND Thy light forth and Thy truth;
let them be guides to me,
And bring me to Thine holy hill,
even where Thy dwellings be.

4 Then will I to God's altar go,
to God my chiefest joy:
Yea, God, my God, Thy name to praise
my harp I will employ.

5 Why art thou then cast down, my soul?
what should discourage thee?

And why with vexing thoughts art thou
disquieted in me?
Still trust in God; for Him to praise
good cause I yet shall have:
He of my countenance is the health,
my God that doth me save.

Let us pray.

We will wash our hands in innocency, so will we compass Thine Altar, O Lord.

Purge us with hyssop, and we shall be clean: Wash us, and we shall be whiter than snow. Make us to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

We will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. We will pay our vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his people.

Father of Lights, Thou that dwellest in light

which is unapproached and uncreated, do Thou send forth Thy light now to guide us, as in our great weakness and unworthiness we approach Thy footstool, and lift up to Thee a voice of prayer. We give Thee thanks for that outward light, the rays of the natural sun, which shine upon our homes and our paths, which direct our steps, and gladden our hearts. But much more we thank Thee for that better light which shines in upon the mind, the light of Thy grace, Thy Word, Thy Spirit. Grant that that holy light may now shine inward in our hearts: and so in Thy light we shall see light, and in the light of Thy countenance we shall be safe and happy. Blessed be Thy name for this light, which no darkness ever overspreads; for this sun, which never goes down. It is in the name of Jesus that we now approach Thee, all unworthy as we are, and all pure and holy as Thou art: For His sake hear us: for His sake accept of us: and make us happy and contented by

the grace of Thy Blessed Spirit as we join in prayer to Thee. Forgive what Thou seest amiss in us: and grant that the prayers which we offer up to Thy divine Majesty, in the name of our common Redeemer, may be presented by Him, acceptable unto Thee.

O our God, we acknowledge that we have nothing but what is the effect of Thy bounty: bless the Lord, O our souls, and declare His loving-kindness to all generations. We humbly and heartily thank Thee for all the graces and favours which Thou hast freely bestowed upon us: for making us rational creatures, and for securing our preservation by the constant effects of Thy Providence; for redeeming us by the death of Thy Son, and for providing the grace of Thy Holy Spirit to sanctify our corrupted nature: for bringing us to the knowledge of the Christian religion: for blessing us with the plentiful means of salvation:

and for preparing a glorious inheritance for those that love Thee and keep Thy commandments: for Thy preservation of us all our days from innumerable accidents and dangers: Oh may we always delight to praise and glorify Thy Holy Name: and above all Thy benefits, to love Thee, our great Benefactor.

Glory be to God in the highest, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, the Preserver of all men, the Father of mercies: Glory be to Thee, O God, who didst so love mankind, when we had forsaken and forgotten Thee, as to send Thine only-begotten and well-beloved Son into this world to redeem us from sin and misery, and to obtain for us everlasting life. Glory be to Thee, Thou Eternal Son of God, Who for our sakes wast made man, Who didst dwell among us, and die for us: we praise and bless Thee that Thou didst purge away our sins by the sacrifice of Thyself, and didst give Thy body and blood to be

our spiritual food and sustenance. O blessed Jesus, Thou who art the image of the invisible God, the Light of the World, the Lamb of God that takes away sin, our great High Priest, our Advocate with the Father, our Intercessor within the veil: we adore and worship Thee as God this day: we look for all blessings through Thy hand alone, who hast all power in heaven and earth. Out of Thy fulness may we receive grace for grace: pardon, and peace, and purity, and complete redemption: Give us humility and meekness, give us holiness and patience: weanedness from the world, resignation to Thy holy will, and contentedness in all conditions: sincerity and uprightness of heart towards Thee, and towards all men. May that Holy Spirit which Thou didst promise should visit Thy people after Thou hadst gone, regenerate and sanctify us and unite us to Thee: May He enlighten our understanding, and dispose our will: may He help our infirmities, fortify

us against all temptation, and enable us to fulfil our duty: may He direct us in doubts, and comfort and support us in troubles: and so sanctify us throughout, that our whole spirit, soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. O heavenly Father, of Thine infinite mercy grant, that nothing in this world may ever be able to separate us from a state of favour and communion with Thee, and Thy Son our Saviour, through the preparations of the Spirit of holiness. Thy favour, O Lord, is better than life, and the communications of Thy grace are more to be desired than all earthly treasure: Thy service is perfect freedom, Thy laws the sure path to eternal bliss: O do Thou strengthen, stablish, and settle us in the practice of them for ever; that being through Thy grace faithful unto death, we may through Thy mercy obtain everlasting life.

But more particularly at this time, O merciful

God, we bless Thee that Thou hast suffered Thy people in this place once more to assemble themselves about a Table of pure and holy Communion. We bless Thee for these pleasant seasons, which come back to us time after time, wherein we are permitted by Thy providence, and enabled by Thy grace, for a little while to withdraw ourselves entirely from the cares of our daily life, and to sit down as it were under the shadow of the Rock of Ages. We bless Thee, our Father, that as we are travelling onwards through this world, as strangers and pilgrims, to a happier, though yet an unseen land, Thou hast given us this rest in our pilgrimage, this pause in our warfare, this peace in our souls. We thank Thee for a day which brings back so plainly before our eyes and our hearts, the dying love and the atoning sacrifice of our great Redeemer. We thank Thee for the quiet and order in which Thou hast permitted us to meet together, that we may do this in remembrance of

Him: and do Thou grant, for Christ's sake, that great peace and joy may now be felt in all Thy people's souls; and consecrate us all in soul and body to be holy temples to Thyself. Pardon the unworthiness which, in the case of all, must mingle even with our best services; and as we are to be engaged for a little space in speaking and in hearing from Thy word, grant that Thy Spirit be poured out upon us, making it very comfortable and profitable alike to speak and to hear. As we have felt Thy presence heretofore in the sanctuary, so may we feel it now: grant that every heart be warmed, and every soul be lifted up, in the remembrance of our Saviour's dying love: and do Thou go on with us in this, and in all our duties, so long as we remain in this world: yea, Father of Mercies, if Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.

And now, Almighty God, if there be other things which we need, but which we in our ignorance and

forgetfulness have failed to ask of Thee, still do Thou, Who knowest our frame, grant them to us. And this we beg through Jesus Christ Thy Son: to Whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Then is read the Lesson from the Old Testament.

Isaiah LIII.

1 WHO hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and

with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a *portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

After which is sung Psalm CXVI.

1 I LOVE the Lord, because my voice
and prayers He did hear,
2 I, while I live, will call on Him,
who bow'd to me His ear.
3 Of death the cords and sorrows did
about me compass round;
The pains of hell took hold on me,
I grief and trouble found.

4 Upon the name of God the Lord
then did I call, and say,
Deliver Thou my soul, O Lord,
I do Thee humbly pray.
5 God merciful and righteous is,
yea, gracious is our Lord.
6 God saves the meek: I was brought low,
He did me help afford.

7 O thou my soul, do thou return
unto thy quiet rest;
For largely, lo, the Lord to thee
His bounty hath exprest.

8 For my distressed soul from death
deliver'd was by Thee:
Thou didst my mourning eyes from tears,
my feet from falling, free.

9 I in the land of those that live
will walk the Lord before.

10 I did believe, therefore I spake:
I was afflicted sore.

11 I said, when I was in my haste,
that all men liars be.

12 What shall I render to the Lord
for all His gifts to me?

13 I'll of salvation take the cup,
on God's name will I call:

14 I'll pay my vows now to the Lord
before His people all.
15 Dear in God's sight is His saints' death.
16 Thy servant, Lord, am I;
Thy servant sure, Thine handmaid's son:
my bands Thou didst untie.

17 Thank-off'rings I to Thee will give,
and on God's name will call.
18 I'll pay my vows now to the Lord
before His people all;
19 Within the courts of God's own house,
within the midst of thee,
O city of Jerusalem.
Praise to the Lord give ye.

The Lesson from the New Testament.—Rev. V.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the

elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the

elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Then is sung Paraphrase LXV.

5 Hark how the adoring hosts above
with songs surround the throne!

Ten thousand thousand are their tongues;
but all their hearts are one.

6 Worthy the Lamb that died, they cry,
to be exalted thus;
Worthy the Lamb, let us reply,
for He was slain for us.

7 To Him be power Divine ascribed,
and endless blessings paid;
Salvation, glory, joy, remain
for ever on His head.

8 Thou hast redeem'd us with Thy blood,
and set the pris'ners free;
Thou mad'st us kings and priests to God,
and we shall reign with Thee.

Let us pray.

O BLESSED and Holy Spirit, by Whose Divine inspiration all Scripture was given at the first, and by

Whose continued grace it is yet made profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness: Lead us at this time, we humbly pray, to the right and full understanding of some portion of that holy word which Thou didst Thyself impart: Enabling us not only clearly to apprehend its meaning, but savingly to receive its teaching in our heart and soul. And this we beg through Jesus Christ, in Whose prevailing Name and words we yet further pray:

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE ACTION-SERMON.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

'And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him.'—St LUKE xxiii. 33.

SOMETIMES, not always, things which were painful and distressing when they happened to us, are very pleasant to remember and to look back upon. Some here present will think of a hero of classic story, who once, in the midst of great sorrows and troubles, tried to cheer up the hearts of the little devoted band of his followers by suggesting this thought to them. The words have more music and felicity in his language than in ours; but this is the meaning of what he said: 'Perhaps, many a day hereafter, it will be pleasant for us to remember all this.' We

have thought the like ourselves. When we have by hard work attained some worthy end, we look back with pleasure on the toils that brought us there. Joy is the sweeter after sorrow. Rest is the happier after weariness. And the griefs and labours which were so painful while we were going through them, sometimes grow softened in memory into something on which we even love to dwell: as rugged mountains, stern and bleak when we are near them, grow soft and blue in the distance, when we look at them from far away.

It is in the thought of this, that on the morning of what we all humbly ask of God may be a pleasant and helpful Communion Sunday, I have taken for the subject of our meditation an event at whose passing the solid earth trembled: from whose sight the sun hid his face away. Let us, this quiet morning, think of the Most Awful Event that ever took place in this world—the Crucifixion of our Blessed

Redeemer. For though it would have been something to fill with a horror unspeakable, for any of us to have stood by and witnessed the circumstances of our Saviour's death, keeping in mind Who it was that thus died,—to have actually seen human beings smiting and mocking and torturing the Divine Jesus, —yet now all the horror and the agony of that death are gone by: Our Master has seen of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied: It is but the shadow of departed anguish that lives on upon the sacred page: The pang is past, and the glory to which it led remains: The cross has mouldered, but the crown is ever bright: And surely our Redeemer Himself, looking around in the heavenly glory upon the ransomed souls to which His death brought life, and listening to the heavenly song, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,'—surely He rejoices now to look back upon His earthly sorrow and dying, from whence His chief glory and our whole salvation

grew. And if it be fact—and God's word says it is—that as the unspeakable duration which is Eternity passes over heaven, the remembrance of Christ's death is cherished there, and His death made the burden of the joyful song of blest spirits for whom He did not die, how much more may we treasure the thought of that atoning death, which is the crowning source of all good we have or hope, in life, death, and immortality! This day, like all His faithful since the first, we specially 'show the Lord's death.' To-morrow, and all days we live, we purpose and pray that we may 'bear about His dying.' And we think of it indeed solemnly and thankfully; but with solemn and thankful joy.

The life of sorrow, not without its gleams of gladness, reflected from the gladness of others, is all but past; and the end, clearly foreseen from the first, is here. Our Master, made perfect through sufferings, has learned, by experience of what we are, to

sympathize with us. He has endured that inexpressible agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, of which we sought reverently to think on a former Communion morning. He has stood before His earthly judge, receiving His sentence from the lips of clay. Scourged, mocked, crowned with thorns (the mockers little thought how glorious that Crown would be, nor how the best of the race would worship the bleeding Head which bore it),* surely He saw the very vilest exhibition of human levity and brutal ruthlessness. The purple robes of mockery have been taken away: and now, bearing the cross on which He was to die, He advances, with faltering steps if tradition

* Salve, Caput cruentatum,
Totum spinis coronatum,
Conquassatum, vulneratum,
Arundine verberatum,
Facie sputis illitâ.

says truly, amid an insensate crowd, towards that eminence lying outside the walls of Jerusalem to the North-West, called Golgotha, the place of a skull. It is interesting to remember that this little height was part of Mount Moriah, where many a day before Abraham had climbed with a sinking heart to offer for a sacrifice his well-beloved son. And as we stand apart, to look on, as the Evangelists revive the scene: as we hear the roar of the crowding rabble (only our brothers after all in human sin and misery): as we see the gleaming temple, the quiet palm-trees, the blue Eastern sky with the early sun,—for it is only between eight and nine o'clock in the morning by our way of naming time: as we note the triumphant malice of priests and Pharisees: as we discern amid the mob, distinguished by the cross He carries, our Blessed Saviour, with the thorns around His Head, torn by the scourge, and fainting beneath His burden: as we mark all this, the thought arises, With

how little solemnity solemn things are sometimes done: How little we human beings sometimes understand the import of what we do! Here was the sacrifice to be offered, which alone gave efficacy to all sacrifices of millions, which was to save mankind: here was something about to be done that God had purposed from the first and angels looked forward to for ages: here was about to happen the greatest and most momentous event this world should ever see: and yet not with the awful solemnity that befitted the occasion, but amid scoffs and jeers and cruel laughter was all this gone through. By and by, worn out, the Saviour faints and falls under the cross He is bearing: it is too much for His sinking strength. There is a moment's pause, till the soldiers lay hold of a man coming in from the country, one Simon, an African, and compel him to carry the cross towards Golgotha. It is some relief in the dark scene before us, to know that there were hearts in the

crowd that felt for Him who had so felt for all. The Evangelist tells us there were women *there*, who 'bewailed and lamented Him.' And it was at this our Lord broke the silence in which He seems to have been advancing; but not with any word of complaint for Himself. 'Daughters of Jerusalem,' He said, 'weep not for me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children.'

Golgotha is reached. And this is the spot, not now to be traced, where Christ must drink the bitterest drops of that cup of anguish in which He 'tasted death for every man.' It should seem that at first, as we know was usual, the Saviour was stripped of His raiment: and then, the cross being laid upon the ground, nailed to it by large iron spikes driven through hands and feet. The agony thus caused—and caused to many a poor creature besides Him—was dreadful: but as no important blood-vessel was pierced, and no organ directly necessary to life

affected, there was nothing to prevent the sufferer from living in anguish for very many hours,—even for several days. We know that, as a last doubtful mercy, it was usual to give the crucified a stupefying potion, to render him comparatively insensible to pain; and seemingly with this intention, a cup of wine mingled with myrrh was offered to our Redeemer: but having tasted it, He refused to drink it. No: with a clear mind, keenly alive to all that should pass, our Lord would tread the valley of the shadow of death. And even as those nails pierced through nerve and bone: even as the cross, straining with its living burden, was lifted from the earth and roughly dropt into its socket: the Saviour breaks silence with the first of those seven sayings which the Church has treasured up as spoken on the cross—'Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do.'

The foretellings of prophecy must be fulfilled to

the minutest particular. The little spoil of the Saviour's raiment was to be divided among the soldiers who had assisted in crucifying Him. They seem to have had no difficulty with anything but the outer garment; which, being woven in one piece, could not be divided without being destroyed. Accordingly, while they divided the other pieces of dress among them, they settled by lot who should take this entire. They did not know, we may be sure, those rude Germans—for it was by soldiers of the German legion all this was done—they did not know that hundreds of years before, one whose name they never heard of had foreseen this very doing: and had written such words as these: 'They parted my raiment among them; and for my vesture they did cast lots.'

Now, with the derisive title above His head, 'This is the King of the Jews,' our Saviour hangs upon the cross. It has been the way to call it 'the ac-

cursed tree:' it has been taught that even yet, on the calmest summer evening, when not a breeze stirs, a sudden shiver will every now and then run through all the leaves of the aspen, because it was of that tree the cross was made, and it shudders evermore at the remembrance of the awful load it bore. And yet, with curious inconsistency, how every fancied fragment of the cross was for ages valued; and there never was prouder royal crown than that round which, a dark thread of iron amid the pure gold, there runs what they thought who fashioned it was one of the nails that held our Lord. No speck of rust, they say, has ever appeared on the iron of that iron crown, though it has been there now for fifteen hundred years. There is yet another story of the Crucifixion which (we know not with what reason) has wonderfully kept its place. You know how the red-breast has been made sacred over Christendom, by the tradition that striving vainly with its little bill to

pluck out a nail, its breast was marked by that precious blood. And so has the legend hallowed the little bird, that few indeed would harm a robin.

It is nine in the morning. Our Lord has but six hours before Him, till pain and humiliation shall be past for ever: but the bitterest and worst comes last. Six hours: and that is all: but no human being can comprehend, as no merely human being could have borne without annihilation, the anguish of these hours. Our Blessed Redeemer is dying. He never did ill to any man, yet He dies that agonizing death. He never did ill to any, yet the rulers and people derided Him, and the soldiers mocked Him, as He hung upon the tree. He pleased the Father alway, yet God forsakes Him (in some sense) too: and now, all alone, He, the sinless, is bearing the wrath and curse due to myriads of sinners. It was the most awful time that ever passed since the creation. Gather round, universe He made: gather round, angels of light:

gather round, powers of darkness; and see the Redeemer die!

Yet amid that wicked human crowd, there were some to feel, as far as mortal could feel, for the suffering Saviour. By the cross, as the sublime hymn has not failed to preserve it, stood His mourning mother.* Not a word does the Evangelist say of what was in her heart: it would have been vain,—it is needless. There was looking on, one beloved disciple, the only one who had ventured to be present there: and a few women, who alone of all that in past days had owned Him as their Lord, dared to own Him still. Calmly our Lord commended to St John the care of His mother: the second saying from the cross was 'Behold thy son: behold thy mother:' the charge was sacred. But there does not seem to have been

* Stabat Mater Dolorosa,
Juxta crucem lacrymosa
Dum pendebat Filius.

any relenting in any other that looked on, of all that looked on. The very worst aspect of human nature was present, as He died for it: yet nothing but we can find its parallel in our own hearts: and we can 'crucify Christ afresh,' even now. As His anguish deepened to its close, something of the darkness within was spread over the scene without. When it came to be noon, there was darkness for the three remaining hours of the Passion. It should have been broad daylight: but the sun, that has looked smiling down on red battle-field and sacked city, was not permitted to look down on sinners crucifying their Saviour. All these, and far more, it had seen: but it did not see Jesus of Nazareth die.

There were three crosses on Calvary. They had thought to do despite to the holy Redeemer by casting Him amid evil company: by numbering Him among sinners,—as if He could here have been numbered with any who were not. He was crucified between those two unnamed thieves.

One joined in the people's railing; irresponsible, we trust, through the wine and myrrh, and through unbearable agony. God's Spirit had apprehended the other; and he rebukes his fellow. Through the gloom of that day, the dying thief looked to the dying Saviour. 'Look unto Me and be ye saved:' God be thanked for the sure promise. Great was that sinking sinner's faith. No human words are better remembered than those he said, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.' Down to that day, no man had ever entreated Christ in vain: will He in this hour of anguish spare thought for another? Yes, the Saviour was dying, but he was still the same. The heart was turning feeble and faint, but it was kind as ever. Through the darkened air, weighed down with anguish we cannot understand, He would say one more gracious word, and do one last deed of mercy. No Christian ever forgets that third saying of the seven:

'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'

The Saviour had spoken. Godhead gleamed out a moment in His words: and there again is the dying man. But he had said enough. After that, the crucified malefactor's end was one of triumph. We hear no more of him, save that his death on the cross was too slow for the scrupulous Jews, and so his end was hastened, lest his parting agonies should pollute their Sabbath-day. But we have heard enough. That day is past more than eighteen centuries since: and we know where he was to be before its close. He is one of the few human beings of whose eternal state we are perfectly certain. He is in heaven. Adam may not be there: Solomon may not be there: sages and martyrs and fathers of the Church may have failed of an entrance: but we know assuredly that the penitent thief is there. It was perhaps presumption, when a good man, speaking of certain saints, said, 'Be my soul with such!' It is

not presumption to say of the penitent thief, Be our souls with *him!*

The dark three hours drag on. Our words, of course, are vain to express the fact. But we can discern that the Saviour's anguish deepens into something too much for even Him to bear. It was not the mere bodily agony of crucifixion: others have borne it all, without a cry or tear. It was not piercing thorns, nor deadly thirst: it was an inner woe, such as never before and never since has been known in this world. It was now 'Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us:' Now 'He bore our sins in His own body on the tree:' Now God 'made to meet on Him the iniquities of us all.' Now, as the Church understands, but does not comprehend, He was enduring all the anguish which all His redeemed would have endured throughout all eternity, had He not died. The eighth hour had past: and under the weight of a world's sin and of the Father's desertion, the mortal

nature of Christ was sinking fast. For we are to be cautious how we receive the notion, true in one sense, that not by natural suffering but only by His own will He died. Deeper and deeper still His anguish grew: as the darkest hour is that before the dawn. And as now He perceived in the cup He was drinking a something bitterer by far than all the rest, He speaks of Himself at last: the fourth saying from the cross: the words of a prophetic psalm: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' Even we can so far understand what it would be if some awful atheistic doubt crossed the martyr's mind as they kindled the fires. We do not presume to say more here. But the worst is over. He is yet deep in dark; but He sees light on the other side. He is preparing now to go. There is just one little thing to do. Many a year before, it had been foretold that in His burning thirst He should have vinegar given Him to drink: He says,

'I thirst:' the fifth saying of the seven: and the prophecy comes literally true. And now it was over. The work was done that had been doing through long and sorrowful ages. With 'a loud voice'—not like the last whisper of mortality, which you scarce can hear—He exclaimed, 'It is finished:' the sixth saying from the cross. And as the darkened sun would have indicated that ninth hour,—three o'clock in the afternoon,—so long the sacred hour of prayer; and as it began to look forth again from the eclipse upon a saved and ransomed world, the Redeemer uttered the last words of all, His seventh saying—'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!' And then He yielded up the weary spirit: He bowed His head and died.

But not too soon. 'It was finished.' There was not a word more left to say: not a thing more to do: not a pang more to bear. Dying as mortals die, He yet died a death separate and alone in divers

solemn respects: and in none more notably than in this —that He was able to say in departing, that it was absolutely and completely finished: that in very deed there was *nothing* left undone that He would wish to do. He had accomplished all for which He came from His heavenly home to this lower world. His own humiliation and suffering were over: the great redemption was complete: the elder dispensation was gone, and the Gospel-day had dawned: and as the massive veil of the Temple parted asunder, and revealed that mystic Holy of Holies which for ages had been hid from common view: as the earth trembled, and the rocks rent, and some dead arose: as amid material portents which fixed the attention of those who knew nothing of our Lord, His spirit departed: surely then the praises above swelled forth in a sevenfold burst of jubilant hosannahs, to welcome Him Who had endured the cross, and vanquished the power of evil, and taken sin away.

You have once more beheld Christ crucified: crucified for each of you. We cannot pretend to understand the reason of what transcends reason; or to know all He did then. One thing is certain: He opened our way to holiness and rest. How shall we regard these things this day? I name two lessons—each in a sentence. See here how evil sin is, and how God punishes it. If God so punished sin, even when the woe fell upon His dear Son, what will befall us, what heavy stripes, if we abide in it! See how God loved the world—loves all. It was for us and our salvation Christ died: it was His love for us that impelled Him to bear all that anguish. We say it humbly: but fathers of the Church have told how God's glory might have been vindicated by our destruction: how the Redeemer might have saved Himself all that anguish and death by leaving us to die. But His love for us was stronger than death; and bore Him through death. Now this is exactly

one of those things we often hear said, without really taking in. God's Spirit make us feel it now!

They tell us that when the first Christian missionaries went to preach Christ's Gospel in the wild tracts of Greenland to the barbarous people there, they carefully considered the matter, and came to the conclusion that it might be as well in speaking to those ignorant heathen, who had never been educated into any appreciation of moral sublimity, to say nothing at all (just at first) about the manner in which Christ died. They thought, these good missionaries, that there was something in the story which would rather prejudice against a religion, whose Founder had passed through such sorrow and shame: and so that it would be better to seek to win men over to believe in Jesus (if they could), keeping back, till the faith of the converts was confirmed, the story of an end so unworthy and wretched, as that

departure upon the accursed tree. But they taught and preached in vain, till their instruction was begun, continued, and ended, in Christ crucified! It did no harm—it did all good—to bid all men know at once that it was on the cross He died. Lifted up thereon, He draws all men to Him. In His death He triumphed: and from the shame the glory grew. Chiefest amid the praises of heaven is, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.' And reckoning up, reckoning up in our imperfection, what that death has done, and is doing, and will do for evermore, we side with a wiser judge than the good Moravians of the right way in which to regard it, and say, 'God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!'

And now unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, His Father:

to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

After Sermon there is sung Paraphrase LIV.

1 I'M not ashamed to own my Lord,
or to defend His cause,
Maintain the glory of His cross,
and honour all His laws.

2 Jesus, my Lord! I know His name,
His name is all my boast;
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
nor let my hope be lost.

3 I know that safe with Him remains,
protected by His power,
What I've committed to His trust,
till the decisive hour.

4 Then will He own His servant's name
before His Father's face,

And in the New Jerusalem
appoint my soul a place.

Let us pray.

GRANT, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have at this time heard with our outward ears, in so far as they are consistent with Thy mind and will, may be impressed on our memory and heart by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit.

And now, O Lord, that Thou art graciously inviting us to make confession of our Saviour at a Communion Table, we desire with all solemnity to declare our faith in those sure and precious doctrines which have been revealed to us in His Gospel: saying, in the fellowship of the Universal Church:

We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the

Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Ghost; The Holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting.

In the faith of these most blessed truths we desire at this time to compass Thy holy table. Lord, we believe: Help Thou our unbelief. We are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and evermore. Amen.

*THE FENCING OF THE TABLES.**

My Christian Friends, we are assembled here this day to celebrate the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ: and we earnestly pray for a special blessing from above, while we are engaged in a duty so solemn and comforting. Let us call to mind, as the authority on which the Christian Church maintains this Holy Sacrament, the words of Institution, as these are set forth in the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians: xi. 23-29.

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread:

24 And when He had given thanks, He brake *it*,

* Abridged from a *Fencing* compiled wholly in the words of the Standards of the Church, by the Rev. T. J. Crawford, D.D., Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh.

and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.

25 After the same manner also He *took* the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Let us mark, then, how that the Lord Jesus in the night wherein he was betrayed did Himself ordain

to us this His Holy Supper, to be observed in His Church until He come again: for the perpetual remembrance of that great sacrifice which He offered up in His death for the sins of the world: for the sealing of all the benefits thereof unto true believers: for their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him: for their farther engagement to all the duties which they owe unto Him: and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other, as members of His mystical body.

The outward elements of bread and wine, being duly set apart to their ordained uses, have such a sacramental relation to Christ crucified, as that properly, yet only in a figure, they be sometimes called by the name of that which they represent: to wit, the body and blood of Christ: albeit in substance and nature they still remain truly and only bread and wine as they were before. Yet true it is, and in no wise to be gainsaid, that the body and blood of

Christ, though not corporally in or along with the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, are spiritually present to the faith of the worthy receivers, no less than the elements themselves are to their outward senses: insomuch that they who rightly observe the Sacrament, do therein receive and apply unto themselves the virtues of His most precious atonement, and the most comfortable benefits purchased thereby, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

But yet, brethren, of this you must be well advised, that no such benefits are to be obtained in the Lord's Supper, save only by such as worthily partake of it.

Those who are ignorant, scandalous, or profane: those who are knowingly impenitent and unbelieving: those who have no true love to the Lord Jesus, and no real charity towards their brethren: those who are living and are yet minded to live in any sin against their knowledge or their conscience: must not pre-

sume to come to this holy table: lest by professing there that knowledge and faith, that love and charity, that penitence and obedience, which their own heart testifieth that they have not, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

But those who are instructed in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, so that they shall be able to discern the meaning and intent of this reasonable service: those who are heartily relying on His sacrifice, so that they can with all godly sincerity show forth His death, and partake of the signs thereof: those who so love Him that they can without guile profess to be doing this in thankful remembrance of Him: those who are so kindly affectioned to each other that they can with a true heart sit down at a communion table, declaring that though many, they are one body in the Lord: those who are so truly penitent for their sins, and so sincere in their purposes of new obedience, that they can with sincerity

testify that they are the Lord's, and set their seal to the covenant that binds them to Him: all such are permitted, yea, they are required, to take their place at the Table of the Lord.

But may one who still doubteth of his being in Christ as a true and firm believer, or of his due preparation, come to the Lord's Supper? We answer in the words of the Larger Catechism: One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation for the Lord's Supper, may, notwithstanding, have a true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof; and in God's account he hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desire to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity: in which case, seeing promises are made and this sacrament is appointed for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians, such a one is to bewail his unbelief, and to labour to have his

doubts resolved: and so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord's Supper, in order that he may be farther strengthened.

For this sacrament is not intended only for such as are far-advanced and firmly-established Christians, but for weak and immature. And, as is truly said in the Book of Common Order, Albeit we feel in ourselves much frailty and wretchedness, so that we have not our faith so perfect and so constant as we ought, being many times ready to distrust the Lord's goodness through the corruption that is in us: and albeit, furthermore, we be not so thoroughly given to serve God, neither have we so fervent a zeal to set forth His glory, as our duty requireth and our heart coveteth: feeling still such rebellion in ourselves that we have need daily to fight against the lusts of our flesh: yet, nevertheless, seeing that our Lord hath dealt so mercifully with us, that we are preserved from falling into despera-

tion and unbelief; and seeing also that He hath endued us with a will and desire to renounce and withstand our own evil affections, and with a longing for His righteousness and the keeping of His commandments: we may be now right well assured that these defaults and manifold imperfections in us shall be no hindrance at all against us to cause Him not to accept us at His spiritual Table. For the end of our coming thither is not to make protestations that we are upright or just in our lives: contrariwise, we come to seek our life and perfection in Jesus Christ, acknowledging the mean-while that we of ourselves are the children of wrath and condemnation, even as others.

Let us consider, then, that this sacrament is a singular medicine for all poor sick creatures: a comfortable help to weak and fainting souls: and that our good Lord, who breaketh not the bruised reed, neither quencheth the smoking flax, requires no other worthi-

ness or fitness in us, but that we unfeignedly acknowledge our sinfulness and emptiness and imperfection, and look up to Him for the supply of all our need. Wherefore in His name we do in an especial manner invite and encourage those among you that labour under the sense and burden of your sins, and grievously lament your shortcomings, and desire to reach out into a greater progress in grace than yet you can attain unto, to come to the Lord's Table: assuring you in the same most blessed Name of all needful ease, refreshing, and strength to your weak and wearied and heavy-laden souls. And to this end we earnestly admonish you that with all lowly reverence ye wait upon this ordinance: that ye heedfully discern the Lord's body broken for you and given unto you: that ye affectionately meditate on His sufferings and death; and that ye thereby stir yourselves up to a vigorous exercise of all your graces: in judging yourselves, and sorrowing for sin: in

earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ: in feeding on Him by faith: receiving of His fulness, trusting in His merits, rejoicing in His love, giving thanks for His grace, and renewing your covenant engagements to His service.

The Ten Commandments. Exod. XX.

1 And God spake all these words, saying,

2 I *am* the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the

children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates:

11 For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

13 Thou shalt not kill.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that *is* thy neighbour's.

The Beatitudes. St Matt. V.

3 Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Let it be well understood to what end these scriptural tests of character are set before you. You are not asked if you have attained that measure: no one living has. But are you seeking after it? And knowing how vainly you do so, are you praying earnestly for God's grace to strengthen and sanctify you: and are you relying simply on the sacrifice of Christ? If, by God's grace, it be so, then without doubt we are accepted of the Father, and invited to partake of those HOLY THINGS WHICH ARE FOR HOLY PERSONS.*

Then is sung Paraphrase XXXV: Meanwhile the Elements of Bread and Wine are carried into the church by the Elders, and set upon the Communion Table.

1 'Twas on that night, when doom'd to know
The eager rage of every foe,
That night in which He was betray'd,
The Saviour of the world took bread:

* *Sancta Sanctis.*

2 And, after thanks and glory given
To Him that rules in earth and heaven,
That symbol of His flesh He broke,
And thus to all His followers spoke:

3 My broken body thus I give
For you, for all; take, eat, and live;
And oft the sacred rite renew,
That brings My wondrous love to view.

4 Then in His hands the cup He raised,
And God anew He thank'd and praised;
While kindness in His bosom glow'd,
And from His lips salvation flow'd:

5 My blood I thus pour forth, He cries,
To cleanse the soul in sin that lies;
In this the covenant is seal'd,
And Heaven's eternal grace reveal'd.

6 With love to man this cup is fraught,
Let all partake the sacred draught;

Through latest ages let it pour
In memory of My dying hour.

Then the presiding minister, standing at the Communion Table, the assisting ministers being on his right and left, and several of the Elders being around, proceeds with the First Table Service.

TABLE SERVICE I.

THROUGH the green glen, out from the town of Sychar, comes a woman with her pitcher on her head, to fill it with water. And there, in the wide plain of waving corn, seeking us, He is sitting wearied: * for a greater than Jacob was there that day: and our Blessed Redeemer was resting by Jacob's well.

He asked the woman to give Him some water to drink: and she, not quite refusing, yet expressed her surprise that a Jew should ask anything of a

* *Quærens me, sedisti lassus.*

woman of Samaria. Then our Saviour, always ready to pass from common to spiritual things, told her that if she knew who He was, she would have asked Him, and He would have given her living water. 'Whosoever drinketh of this water,' He said (and He pointed to that honoured well), 'shall thirst again;' and the woman knew He said true: 'but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' The woman answered ignorantly: for she thought He spake of such water as lay deep in the rock below: and she said, 'Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.' It was not that water Christ meant: it is not such water we mean: yet we may very fitly at a Communion Table take up the Samaritan woman's words, and say, Lord, give us this water, that we thirst no more.

And what was this water, so wonderfully adapted to quench the thirst of the longing and fainting soul? Was it such water as the Apostle John saw in vision, when the angel showed him 'a pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb?' Was it such as the Psalmist thought of, when he said of his God, 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters?' Was it such as the prophet meant, when he cried, 'Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters?' or as the Spirit and the Bride spake of when they gave forth the invitation, 'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely?' Doubtless it was that water which Christ Himself offered when in the great day of the Feast at Jerusalem He stood and cried, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink:' or when He said, 'I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall

never thirst.' 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread which I give is My flesh, which I give for the life of the world.' 'Whosoever eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day: For My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.' Is it not our humble desire, then, at a Communion Table,—'Lord, evermore give us this bread:' 'Lord, give us this water, that we thirst no more?'

'His flesh is meat indeed, His blood is drink indeed:' and you have now come to that Table where, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith His people are made partakers of His body and blood. You have before you now the memorials of Christ's shed blood and broken body: May these elements be to us as the bread and water of life, for the nourishment of our im-

mortal souls. But we should err as far as the poor Samaritan woman, if we fancied that in these elements, or in this rite, there was anything which could of itself nourish our souls. It is not materially but by faith we are here to eat and drink: and it is on Christ Himself we must feed; if we would partake of that bread of which if a man eat he shall never die; and of that water of which if a man drink he shall live for ever.

And that we may savingly feed upon Christ, it is needful that we should receive not these elements in our lips, but His atonement in our hearts. The sign is well: but the value lies in the thing it signifies. If it were, as some have fancied it, the very flesh and blood of the Redeemer that lay upon that Table before us, we might partake of both, and yet have not the least interest in the promise, Whosoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. *That* flesh would *not* be meat indeed

to the soul, nor *that* blood drink indeed. No: the living water Christ promised to the woman of Samaria, was a purely spiritual blessing: and the believer partakes of the body and blood of his Saviour in a purely spiritual way. Yet, in very truth, do the Saviour's people at His Table partake of the bread and water of life, when they feel with more than ordinary clearness the all-sufficiency of Christ, and with firmer faith appropriate His promises, and realize more substantially how safe they are in Him for time and eternity: and in very truth, do they day by day feed upon Christ, and find Him all that is signified by the figures of which we have been thinking, when they receive Him with all their hearts, trust in Him with all their souls, enjoy the consolations and hopes of His religion amid all their daily trials and duties, find the perfect peace even here of the man whose mind is stayed upon his God, and anticipate the unmin-

gled quiet and happiness of the sanctuary above.

Lord, evermore give us this bread, for the support, and growth, and consolation of our souls. Lord, give us this water, the influences of Thy Blessed Spirit, the sense of Thy favourable presence: and so shall our souls have all their desire; so shall the thirsty longing of our hearts be satisfied; so shall we thirst no more!

On that ever-memorable Night, in which our Saviour was betrayed into the hands of sinners, He took bread:

But before He brake the bread or gave the cup He gave thanks and prayed. In His Name, after His example, let us now lift up our hearts,* and give thanks unto the Lord our God.

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* *Sursum corda.*

Prayer of Consecration.

O gracious God, Who art most merciful and most mighty, we, creatures of Thy hand, and (as we humbly trust) heirs of Thy salvation, do with all thankfulness of heart approach Thee in the name of our blessed Redeemer. For all Thy bounties known to us, for all unknown, we give Thee thanks. Not as we ought, but as we are able, we bless Thee that after by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, it pleased Thee to look on us with pity, and to lay help on One mighty to save. We thank Thee that in the hour of the primal sin, there was mercy mingled with Thy words of just sentence, in the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. We bless Thee that through many ages, with growing light, types and sacrifices foretold better things to come. We bless Thee that the blood, shed on Thine altars of old, spake

of the atoning blood that taketh sin away; and that the incense that went up in memorial morning and evening, foreshadowed that great sacrifice of richer fragrance and deeper worth. Specially we bless Thee, that when the fulness of the time was come, Thy Son our Redeemer became Incarnate. We bless Thee for His life upon earth; but above all, that He suffered death on the cross for our salvation, and made therein, by His one oblation of Himself once offered, a full and perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of His people. We bless Thee for the coming of the Holy Ghost; for the sacraments and ordinances of the Church; and specially that our Lord did institute, and in His holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that His precious death, till His coming again. We bless Thee for the Table spread in the wilderness, and the Feast prepared: and being here met to obey our Redeemer's dying command, we ask that these elements, which now in His

name and by His authority we set apart from a common to a sacred purpose, may convey to Thy people the grace of the new Covenant; and being received by faithful hearts, may be as earnests of that Bread of which if a man eat he shall never die, and of that Water of which if a man drink he shall live for ever.

Thee, mighty God, heavenly King, we magnify and praise. With angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts: Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

And to Thee, Blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

ON THAT EVER-MEMORABLE NIGHT, IN WHICH OUR SAVIOUR WAS BETRAYED INTO THE HANDS OF

SINNERS, HE TOOK BREAD. AND HAVING BLESSED IT, AS HAS NOW BEEN DONE IN HIS NAME AND AFTER HIS EXAMPLE, HE BRAKE IT, AND GAVE IT TO THE DISCIPLES, SAYING, TAKE, EAT: THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS BROKEN FOR YOU: THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

IN LIKE MANNER, WHEN HE HAD SUPPED, HE TOOK THE CUP AND GAVE IT TO THE DISCIPLES, SAYING, THIS CUP IS THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MY BLOOD, SHED FOR MANY FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS: DRINK YE ALL OF IT.

FOR AS OFTEN AS YE EAT THIS BREAD, AND DRINK THIS CUP, YE DO SHOW THE LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COME.

So saying, the presiding minister gives first the bread and then the cup to the assisting ministers and elders. Then the elders carry the consecrated elements to the communicants, reverently seated at tables covered with white cloth. Entire silence is preserved till all have received. Then the minister proceeds:

He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: so said Christ of the water of Jacob's well. It was a pure fountain of cool waters: they tell us it is so yet: and it could refresh the weary traveller for the time. But let him again plod on his journey; again tread on the heated sand, and again feel the burning sun: and in a little his tongue would be parched and his heart faint as before.

But may we not extend the statement to every fountain at which man can seek to quench his thirst, save that spiritual one of living waters? Drink at the fountain of worldly wealth: the soul will still find that there remains an aching void within, a thirst unslaked, which worldly wealth cannot satisfy. Drink at

the fountain of worldly distinction: the soul will still find a great thirst within, which *that* cannot slake. Drink at the fountain of home comforts and joys, of kindly domestic affections: ah, how often that cup is dashed from the lips, leaving the man to thirst again; how often, by the cold fire-side, lonely and desolate, the mourner feels in his sinking heart that *that* fountain is dry!

But he who drinks at the fountain of living waters, will there find what will perfectly satisfy the desires of his spiritual nature. He who feels spiritual thirst will find at this fountain a supply which will leave no uneasy craving behind. Is it pardon he needs? He will find *that* there. Is it purity of heart he longs for? Day by day he may grow in grace, nourished by what he will find there. Is it peace he wants? If in this world, he will find it there. Guidance, strength, comfort, hope, a friend, a father, a home,—glory, honour, and immortality,—

he will find all there. If he do not find all, it is not that they are not there to find: it is because he will not seek for them, or will not seek the right way.

And in the infirmity of our nature, and the imperfection of our grace, even to the end of life the believer may thirst, and thirst sorely. He may long for an assurance of acceptance with God he cannot get; sigh for holiness he cannot reach; long for perfect peace while his heart is careful and troubled about many things. The living water runs indeed by his side: he might drink of that Rock which follows him (and that Rock is Christ): and alongside his dusty path of work-day life there murmurs on the rill of spiritual comfort and privilege and hope; but in his waywardness he may be looking everywhere for something to satisfy his thirst, except to that which alone can do it. Ah, communicants, how often we all do what is so well described in the Scriptural figure; turn away from the fountain of life, and hew out to

ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water! How often we think to satisfy the longings of our souls with earthly comforts and blessings, as if these were all they needed :—earthly comforts and blessings many of them valuable and excellent in their way :—but *not* the bread of which if a man eat he shall never die, not the water of which the soul that drinks shall thirst no more. Even as regards spiritual blessing, we must daily drink at the fountain : the Rock follows us, the stream from the smitten Rock of Ages keeps by the believer's side ; and from that satisfying and refreshing water we must drink day by day.

And a time will come at last, when there shall be a perfect fulfilment of that promise which is here fulfilled only in part, 'He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.' If even to the end of his pilgrimage through this world, the believer should sometimes be constrained to complain with the Psalmist, 'My soul thirsteth for God, my

flesh longeth for Him in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is,' he can look forward to a life and a world wherein all *that* shall be over. For how speaks the Apostle of the Christian's happy home? 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

Oh for that happy time! Blessed Saviour, guide us safely to that delightful country! For 'our souls thirst for God, for the living God: when shall we come and appear before God!'

Go in peace from the Table of the Lord: and may the God of all love and peace go with you, to bless you and do you good.

Then is sung a portion of Psalm CIII., to the tune Coleshill.

1 O THOU my soul, bless God the Lord;
and all that in me is
Be stirred up His holy name
to magnify and bless.

2 Bless, O my soul, the Lord thy God,
and not forgetful be
Of all His gracious benefits
He hath bestow'd on thee.

After this, the communicants who have received rise and depart from the Communion Table. And their places are filled by others.

TABLE SERVICE II.

To this Holy Table we come oftentimes, Christian friends: Not so often as many of our fellow-Christians do; yet as years pass on, our Communion

seasons mount up, and grow many: so many, that we cannot remember distinctly, most of us, each day on which we made this good profession, and how it was with our souls upon that day. We come to the Holy Table in all moods of mind: in all states of bodily health: in all outward circumstances of joy or sorrow. We have our sunshiny Communion Sundays and our overcast ones; with their inward sunshine and shade. Perhaps we are wrong in asking for a uniform experience of even our unchanging Saviour's grace, in this world where unchanged truths do yet change their aspects to us as we ourselves change. The returning anniversaries of the most touching and memorable events in our family histories are not the same: each has its own shade of character; and we cannot make them alike, do what we may. Is it not so, in some measure, with our Communion seasons? We think of our Saviour's love and grace; and these are unchanged: Would

that we could always feel them as we ought! And perhaps we are wrong in looking, even in their contemplation on a day like this, for a glow of feeling which grows less common when we begin to grow old. We are but laying up disappointment for ourselves, doing so.

If our remembering our Lord at His Table, and our feeding upon Him by faith, were a mechanical work under the control of our will, then we might make sure, every time we did it, that it should be done equally well, and to equal profit. But whenever work comes to be mental, and yet more when it comes to be spiritual, it becomes difficult, and it becomes uncertain. And the simplest reliance on God's grace, and the most earnest prayer for God's Spirit, will never make it any other, while we remain the beings we are. The glow of devotion; the rapture which lifts up the soul as into the air of Paradise, and makes it walk as with angels through

the Land Beulah: these must come spontaneous, or they will not come at all. Yet though feeling be not at our command, purpose is: calm purpose here to show forth our Redeemer's death, and to declare ourselves His faithful soldiers and servants to our life's end: calm purpose that by God's grace, promised and never-failing, we shall deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world: calm purpose that here by faith we shall, if God enable us, devoutly feed upon our Lord's broken body and shed blood: humbly and thankfully receiving whatever portion of the children's bread it may please Him to give us, even though it should taste less sweet and refreshing than we have known it do.

And looking at Christ's faithful ones, devoutly sitting at His Table of Communion, what minister does not feel, with advancing experience, as though they were best left mainly to their own meditation:

each one for himself recalling his own history: thinking of Christ's goodness to himself: calling to remembrance his own burdens and cares, and casting all upon the strong arm of Almighty God: thinking of work to be done, and asking that this spiritual food may strengthen to do it: praying with all prayer for a heart filled with the Holy Spirit: like the Psalmist of old, if the heart be cast down and weak, remembering God from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar: Not from the everlasting hills, from whence cometh our help, though to them too we shall lift up our eyes; but from the hill Mizar, the 'little hill;' the season in our own experience wherein we found our Saviour so merciful and true: when we were in great perplexity which way to go, and He wonderfully inclined us, we know not how, to that way which now we can see was right: when we were burdened with the sense of sin, and were enabled truly to cling to the

Cross: when we were pressed down beneath a special weight of care, and were enabled to cast all our care on Him: when we were weak and sorrowful, and asked for light and strength, and so doing were well assured that our hearts were suddenly strengthened and cheered by the blessed communications of His Blessed and Holy Spirit.

Looking back on times like these, we will now remember our Saviour, and all He has done for us.

ON THAT EVER-MEMORABLE NIGHT, ETC.

WE have taken the cup of salvation, and called upon the name of the Lord. We have paid our vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all His people.

And having thus paid our vows, our purpose is, in what remains of this life, that by God's grace we fulfil them. By God's grace.

Surely we often fall into error, thinking of how dependent we are on God's grace, and of how it is to

strengthen us. No doubt, we can do nothing in any strength of our own; and by God's grace we can do all things we are called to do, in fulfilling duty and resisting temptation. But we sometimes have a feeling as if when we have prayed to have our heart filled with the Holy Spirit, we have just to sit still and somehow we shall grow better, without any effort of our own. This is not what we may commonly expect. What we may expect is, that if we earnestly pray for God's grace, and then exert ourselves to the utmost, we shall be able, we do not know how, to do what otherwise we could not have done. Now, this sounds mystical. We cannot explain the how and why of it. But there are many things of which we are quite sure, although we cannot explain how they come to be. No one can explain how, from one grain of wheat that decays in the ground, months afterwards you may reap thirty, sixty, a hundred. No one has the least approach to a clear idea of how that

comes to be: yet we know it does come to be. So with the help we get from God's grace and spirit. It comes: that is certain. It somehow re-inforces our feeble strength: its impulses somehow weave in with the operations of our own minds. The meaning is this: You have a work to do: you try to do it: you find that you cannot do it. Then you pray for God's grace: you try now to do your work: somehow you feel stronger; and you do it,—do what before you could not do. So with temptation. There is a sin, you know what, which doth easily beset you: hasty speech, unkind thought, or some other: Many times the temptation came, and you yielded to it: you faintly resisted, but yielded in the end. But on some happy day, as you set yourself with all your strength to resist the evil impulse, you sought God's grace: and you were aware that either the impulse that day was weaker or you were stronger; for you easily put it by. Thus God's grace helps us. It will not help

the sluggard. But diligently do what you are called to do, seeking God's grace; and the strength will come: come in due degree. Yea, as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

We go away, Christian friends, from this holy place where we have vowed to the Lord, looking for His grace to help us to fulfil our vows. But remember, no one can keep your vows for you, except yourself. God's grace will not keep your vows for you: it will enable you to keep them, if you diligently try with all your strength to keep them for yourselves. And, by His Spirit enabling us, surely we are minded, and firmly purposed, so to do.

Go in peace from the Table of the Lord: and may the God of Peace Himself give you peace always by all means.

Then is sung a further portion of Psalm CIII. to the same tune.

3 All thine iniquities who doth
most graciously forgive:
Who thy diseases all and pains
doth heal, and thee relieve.

4 Who doth redeem thy life, that thou
to death may'st not go down;
Who thee with loving-kindness doth
and tender mercies crown.

TABLE SERVICE III.

We all know, communicants, that when we are very much interested in a thing, there is no end of the lights in which we shall place it, or of the points of view from which we shall regard it. And if Christ be the Christian's all in all: if Christ be not only the first thing in the Christian's heart, but everything:

it will not be at all needful, though he should come ever so frequently to the Communion Table, that the communicant's thoughts should run always just in the beaten track. We can look at the Saviour in a hundred lights: we can regard Him from a hundred different points of view. Our 'meditation of Him,' which let us hope that many of us, like the Psalmist, have found to be 'sweet;' need not consist, as our remembrance of earthly friends generally does, in going backwards and forwards over the same two or three perpetually-repeated thoughts. It is a pleasant occupation for the Christian at all times, and here more especially, to let the mind dwell upon the thought of Christ, looking at Him in many different ways: and the Bible shows us that a like spirit has come down among believers since the birth of time; and that nature has been scanned and searched through for analogies and emblems, to bring fresher and warmer home to the heart the thought of our

Blessed Lord. All that seemed to type wisdom, and strength, and beauty, and fragrance, and refreshment, and unchanging sameness, and life, and light, and joy, has been taken in one age or another of the world's story, to set out more clearly the bright attributes of the Redeemer, and to swell the list of his 'many names.' There are manifold ways of regarding Christ, and the benefits we derive from Him, which might each furnish us with matter for meditation on such an occasion as this. We might think of Him as the 'Branch of Right,' that 'Plant of Renown,' which should grow from the root of Jesse: as the 'Bread of Life,' of which if a man eat he shall never die: as the 'Bright and Morning Star' that dawned upon the Gospel-day, and that leads on to glory and immortality. We might think of Him as the 'Captain of Salvation' who has routed our spiritual foes: as the 'Corner-Stone,' that 'Foundation of God' whereon

the soul that rests is safe from the storms and floods of judgment: as the 'Counsellor' to all true wisdom: as the 'Deliverer' from all real danger: the 'Faithful Witness' who tells us all we need to know: the 'Fountain Opened,' whence flow the gladdening waters of eternal life. We might think of Him as the 'High Priest' who offered the one sacrifice that since time began had virtue to take sin away: the 'King' before whom all nations and all hearts shall yet bow down: the 'Prophet' who reveals to us God's will: the 'Lamb of God' whose blood has the strange power to wash the guilty soul back to the whiteness of innocence: the 'Light of the World,' but for whom the outward sun would shed His beams in vain: the 'Prince of Peace' who yet shall reckon all human beings amid the subjects of His world-wide sway. We do not wonder that the prophet spake of Him as the 'Refiner,' Who cleanses all the heart: we do not wonder if thinking of guidance

kinder and more constant than ever was bestowed by man, the Apostle should repeat his own declaration that He is the 'Good Shepherd,' the 'Shepherd and Bishop of Souls:' we do not wonder if such as remembered how He dispelled the shadows of ignorance and eternal death from a benighted earth, should speak of Him as the 'Sun of Righteousness' that rose upon the world with healing in His wings: we do not wonder if many a time, in quiet thought, His people have found food for reflection in following up the thoughts suggested by His own declaration, that He is 'the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.' I know that each has his own manner of regarding our Blessed Redeemer, which early associations have made most pleasant: but I think that none of us can fail to linger with a great delight upon that beautiful combination of pleasant images in which our Saviour is represented by the prophet;—I think that at a Communion Table few words can fall more pleasantly

or more fitly on the ear;—than those in which the prophet tells us, that 'a Man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'

How sweetly does that ancient, yet never-forgotten combination of pleasant images, fall upon the Christian pilgrim's heart! How dear to the dweller in the parched Oriental lands, the thought of the hot wind of the desert searching round our 'hiding-place,' but finding no entrance there: of the howling storm wrestling with the mighty trees, and calling forth from them their stern wails as of agony, yet shut out from that 'covert,' where, safe from all its assault, our souls are sweetly sheltered! With what cool breaths, only to think of it, would come the mention of 'rivers of water in a dry place:' of the clear, sparkling, ever-flowing murmur that makes all things round green and glad: or of the 'shadow of a great

rock in a weary land;' with all it tells of rest and joy in the ceaseless pilgrimage; with its pictures of the weary wayfarers, stretched in the luxury of repose upon the cool turf, and baring their brows to the fanning wind; and of the patient camel, loosed from its heavy load, browsing lazily upon the prickly herbage of the desert! So pleasant and refreshful would be the thoughts called up before the mind of an Oriental, by these images wherein our Redeemer's character and work are represented: and though in a country like ours, some of the images may lose somewhat of their vividness, even we can understand the value of shelter from the storm, and refreshment in the hour of weakness and weariness. And yet more, when we look to the spiritual significance of the words, and remember how beautifully they set out what the Redeemer is to our souls, it should be a delightful employment at a Communion Table, to think of Him as a 'hiding-place from the wind, and

a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'

For these images, while they represent the Saviour, represent also ourselves. While they remind us of what Christ is to His own, they remind us also of how much we need Christ. They picture us as wandering over a waste wilderness, exposed to the fury of the storm: else we should not need the 'hiding-place from the wind,' nor the 'covert from the tempest.' And such a storm does by nature threaten us all: even the fiery flood of God's wrath for sin; the thunders and lightnings of a broken law; the wrath and curse which are denounced against all transgression: and it is only by fleeing unto Christ that we can find shelter from these: He is the only hiding-place and covert that can protect from these: and we know that those who refuse to flee to Him will at the Judgment-day call in vain

on the mountains to fall on them, and the rocks to cover them, and hide them from the wrath of God. Then, again, these images picture us as travellers through the burning desert, parched with thirst, worn out with toil, and fainting with heat; else we should not need the 'rivers of water in a dry place,' nor the 'shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' And when we think, communicants, of the steep and difficult way which as Christian pilgrims we must traverse, often with the weary foot and the sinking heart, well may we love to meditate upon Him, through whom we obtain that strength and consolation of the Blessed Spirit which are to the soul what to the traveller are the fountain and the rock: save that *our* 'great rock' is that 'Rock of Ages,' hidden in whose clefts no ill can reach us; and that our 'rivers of water' are of that 'water of life,' which can refresh and gladden the weary and fainting soul!

And surely here, on a Communion day, we have come to a point in our pilgrimage where we are warranted to hope that we may find our Saviour all that the Prophet said He should be. As we 'do this in remembrance of Him' and His atoning sacrifice, may He be to our souls what He has been to His people for ages. Shadow of the Great Rock, shelter us in this weary land! Hide us from the wind: cover us from the tempest: refresh our souls as with rivers of living water in this dry place: and may these elements, partaken of at Thy appointment, be as that bread of which whosoever eats shall never die; and that water of which whosoever drinks shall live for ever!

ON THAT EVER-MEMORABLE NIGHT, ETC.

'TILL He come:' There is the limit of this Sacrament's continuance: it is not a thing that is always to go on. 'As often as ye eat this bread and

drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death *till He come.*' There will be a day—we do not know when—that this rite shall be celebrated for the last time. Its beginning carries our minds back to the time of our Saviour's deepest humiliation: its end carries on our view to the season when He shall come in glory to judge the world. This Sacrament, then, is not a thing which is intended to last for ever: it is not even a thing which is intended to last long. 'Behold, I come quickly,' are Christ's own words, yet this Rite is to continue only 'till He come.' And after time is done—after our Lord has come in glory—all these ages through which men have joined in this Sacrament will seem like almost nothing: and saved souls, millions of years hereafter, will speak of the little time for which the Sacrament of the Supper strengthened and gladdened weary souls, as a mere hand-breadth in the countless ages of the Scheme, the Working-out, and the Results, of the Great Redemption.

And for this reason among others, communicants, perhaps it was fit enough, that in looking over Christ's names and doings, we should select from all the characters in which we might regard our Saviour that which we did. We sat down here for a little while to think of Christ: we considered how we should think of Him: and I sought to lead your meditation of Him into an old and pleasant track: 'A hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' And it is fit enough, that at a Feast which is only temporary, we should regard Christ in a character which is only temporary, however pleasing and beautiful it be. It is only while the believer remains in this world of sin and sorrow, that he can regard the Saviour as standing to him in such a relation as that on which we have dwelt. When the believer has entered that world where there is no wind and no

tempest, he will need no hiding-place and no covert *there*. When the believer has entered that glorious world, though Christ may be the Rock of Ages still, and still the water of life, He will not be as 'rivers in a dry place;' nor will He cast His refreshing shadow over a 'weary land.' It is now, in this evil world, where Christ is all that stands between us and the fiery floods of God's wrath for sin: it is here, where we faint and stumble along this weary pilgrimage, that this beautiful promise is being fulfilled in the experience of Christ's people. Now our Saviour *is* our hiding-place and our covert, our river of life and our rock of shadow. The prophet looked far forward into the future, and wrote, 'A man *shall be* a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest:' and after the last Communion Service is over,—when the believer drinks this earthly cup no more,—if ever he desires to think of Christ thus, he will have to look back upon his own

life in this world, and say, As I laboured upon earth, as I prayed, and toiled, and sinned, and suffered there, my Saviour used to be, long ago, as 'a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land!'

Enjoy, then, communicants, while it lasts, the present reality of this gracious promise; for it will not last long. Look to Christ in this light while He still stands in this light to you. They tell us that some of the most beautiful aspects of the sun—as, for example, the rich golden sunsets—are the result of causes in our own atmosphere: it is only to beings who dwell among earthly vapours and clouds that he appears in that majesty of purple and gold. And even so it is only to souls dwelling in a world of sin and sorrow, that our Blessed Lord can wear this aspect to which I have sought to turn your thoughts. It is only to those round whom 'winds' and 'tempests'

blow, that Jesus can look like the 'hiding-place' and the 'covert:' it is only in a 'dry place' that we know the full value of 'rivers of water;' and no one can know how precious is the 'shadow of a great rock' half so well as he who journeys through 'a weary land.' It is just because the Sun of Righteousness shines upon us through a laden atmosphere of sin and sorrow, that He wears to our eyes this beautiful aspect of which we speak. The happy spirits who never sinned can hardly understand the delight with which we look to Jesus thus. *They* never needed a Saviour: *they* cannot feel, as we do, all that *that* word means. Yet though when *you* have entered the world where weariness, and peril, and sorrow, and sin are done with, you may choose other ways in which to regard your Lord; surely when now you rise from that table with some anxious thoughts of all that awaits you as you resume your wilderness way, you will hardly be able to look to Jesus in a light more

exactly suited to your needs; and you will hardly be able to frame a more comprehensive prayer, than that this Divine 'Man Christ Jesus' may be to each and all of us 'as a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land!'

Go in peace from the Table of the Lord: and the God of peace go with you.

Then is sung a further portion of Psalm CIII., to the same tune.

5 Who with abundance of good things
doth satisfy thy mouth;
So that, even as the eagle's age,
renewed is thy youth.

6 God righteous judgment executes
for all oppressed ones.

7 His ways to Moses, He his acts
made known to Israel's sons.

*TABLE SERVICE IV.**

Dear Friends: How many things come into our minds, coming to Christ's Table: how many remembrances of such times when we came in days that are gone: remembrances of fears that were in our hearts when we sat down at the Holy Table;—fears which proved quite groundless;—the trouble we anticipated never came: and remembrances, too, of hopes we cherished, and worldly plans,—which it pleased God to say should all crumble in dust! You who are young, coming perhaps for the first time to the Lord's Table, with your fresh feelings and earnest purposes of cleaving to your Saviour, God keep your young hearts and grant your good purposes may en-

* This service is mainly derived from the Volume entitled *Euchologion*, published by *The Church Service Society*.

dure: but you cannot know what the Holy Communion is to many,—with all that is best in whom it is blended; and to whom God's grace has made it an unspeakable comfort and help. God, by His good Spirit, make it all that to-day!

We have come up to the mount of ordinances: pleasant is the old name one used to hear as a child. The world is behind us: the world is below. We desire that nothing may hinder us of feeling our Saviour's presence: of feeling ourselves safe, and quiet, and without carefulness, in His presence. Let us lift up our hearts: yea, rather lift Thou up our hearts, Blessed Spirit of God.

And what is there to be thought of in this quiet time, but the old message from heaven to earth; God's love in Christ to us sinful human beings? We wish that we had more faith in it. We do not desire at all, now, to have any new tracks of meditation pointed out to us. We desire, gratefully,

and peacefully, to think of Christ; and of His blessed death which is our life; and of His glorious resurrection. We desire by faith to feed upon Him, Who is the Bread and Water of life to the longing soul.

We do this in remembrance of Him. We look upon the elements set apart by the word and prayer to be sacramentally the body and blood of Christ: we are persuaded of the mystery of His holy Incarnation—God manifest in the flesh: that He was sent of the Father into the world; and took our flesh and blood, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

We are persuaded that having taken our nature, He endured for us the curse and punishment of sin, and so satisfied Divine Justice: that He was bound that we might be set free, was reviled that we might come to honour, was condemned that we might be acquitted at the judgment-seat of God: yea, that He suffered His blessed body to be nailed to the cross,

and bowed His head in death, that we might be accepted of God and raised to life in Him: and this one offering up of Himself we commemorate and show forth in the breaking of bread, with a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same.

And as our Lord hath ordained that we are to eat of this bread and drink of this cup, to assure us of our union with Him, and that He giveth us His body and His blood to be our meat and our drink unto life eternal; we are not to doubt His goodness, but to be firmly persuaded that He accomplisheth spiritually in us all that He outwardly exhibits. For the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the body of Christ?

And as by His death He hath obtained for us the life-giving Spirit, Which, dwelling in Him as the Head, and in us as His members, unites us all in one

Body, we are to receive this Supper in brotherly love, and mindful of the Communion of Saints. For we, being many, are one body; for we are all partakers of that one Bread. We rejoice in the holy fellowship wherein we have part with the faithful patriarchs and prophets of old; the holy apostles and evangelists; the blessed martyrs and confessors: the redeemed of all ages who have died in the Lord, and now live with Him for evermore; our fathers, our brethren, our children, and the friends who were as our own souls: believing that though our eyes behold them no more, they have not perished; but that as Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

ON THAT EVER MEMORABLE NIGHT, ETC.

DEAR Brethren: Since the Lord hath now fed our souls at His table, let us praise His holy name with thanksgiving, Who hath not spared His own Son,

but delivered Him for us all, and given us all things with Him: who commendeth His love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us: much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Let us, therefore, show forth His praise from this time forth for evermore: glorifying God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are His: ever walking worthy of His grace, and of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

Surely, now, the right feeling of our hearts is thankfulness: quiet thankfulness and rest of soul. It is a feverish life many live: and there are perplexities and troubles waiting for some of us beyond these walls: but there are rest and thankfulness here, duty and privilege together. We are thankful that God has vouchsafed to feed us with the spiritual food

of the most precious body and blood of His Son our Saviour: assuring us thereby that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of our Lord, and heirs through hope of His everlasting kingdom. And thus thankful for present and past, we are trustful for the future. The Lord hath been mindful of us: He will bless us. Specially we trust that He will so assist us with the grace of His Holy Spirit, that we may continue in that holy fellowship to which we have attained; and do all such good works as He hath before ordained that we should walk in them: offering not now only, but in all our life, ourselves to God, our souls and bodies, dedicating ourselves wholly to His service, henceforth to live only to His glory.

It is a good and happy life that awaits us, if it please God that these things indeed be so. Doubtless, there will be many failures: but His providence and grace will keep us from great sin and sorrow;

and from evil that it may not grieve us. And if He sees we are able to bear it meekly, He may grant us further blessing, granted indeed to few: as assurance of His love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost.

Go in peace from the Table of the Lord: and the God of peace go with you.

Then is sung part of Psalm CXV.

12 The Lord of us hath mindful been,
and He will bless us still:
He will the house of Israel bless,
bless Aaron's house He will.

13 Both small and great, that fear the Lord,
He will them surely bless.

14 The Lord will you, you and your seed,
aye more and more increase.

15 O blessed are ye of the Lord,
Who made the earth and heaven.

16 The heaven, even heavens, are God's, but He
earth to men's sons hath given.
17 The dead, nor who to silence go,
God's praise do not record.
18 But henceforth we for ever will
bless God. Praise ye the Lord.

CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

When this holy Sacrament, which we have once more celebrated, was observed for the first time, our Blessed Saviour and His apostles closed their observance of it by singing a hymn. And we, at the close of our Communion Service, have now done the like: and we have sung not merely a hymn like theirs, but part of the self-same hymn they sang. For as we find that our Lord conformed, in His observance of the Passover-feast, to various rules current among the Jews, though not of Divine

authority, we have every reason to believe that He did not choose another than the hymn which the Jews invariably used upon that occasion. We know that in compliance with the common usage, He reclined at His Last Supper, though at its first institution the Passover-feast was to be partaken of in haste. We know that, in compliance with the common usage, wine formed part of the feast: and that its presence indeed suggested its perpetual use in the better Passover we have witnessed to-day. And so we may conclude that the parting hymn—the very last in which the Saviour's voice ever joined in this world—was that which the Jews called the Hallel, containing the CXIIIth and five following psalms, which the authorities of the Jewish Church expressly commanded should be sung at that time. You would have said indeed, that this was no fitting occasion for a joyful hymn. You would have said that *that* was the season rather for earnest prayer than for cheerful

praise. For the hour of parting was very near: and all of you, who have gone through times of parting, can think how heavy a weight must have been gathering upon each heart in that quiet upper-chamber as the evening was drawing on. You can think—for there was not one heart there that did not know the weakness of humanity—how all would shrink from the moment of rising, and breaking up their talk together, and going out into the cold outer gloom. The Redeemer was going forth to undergo such sorrow, such agony, as never had been felt upon this sorrowful world's face before. And as for the apostles, before them lay the pang of parting: before them lay that labour and trial which never should end but with life. For we are told that 'when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.'

And it seems to me, dear friends, that we, at the close of our Communion Service, have something like

that to do. Our Lord went forth to the quiet of the mount of Olives first: but in a little while He was to come to the place called Gethsemane, where He was to endure His agony, where He was to be found by His betrayer, whence He was to be led away to the judgment-hall and to the cross. So that to say that when the parting hymn was sung, He and His apostles went out to the mount of Olives, is to say that from the peaceful chamber, after those last notes of praise, He and they went out to all that lay before them. It was like the little bark, that from some sheltered nook where it was lying quiet and safe, puts out unwillingly into the full fury of winds and waves. And we, my friends, have just the same to do. We have been enjoying something more than an ordinary Lord's Day. It has been not merely that withdrawal from worldly work and care which we wish for upon every day of rest: it has been the special peace of a day of high communion. God be thanked for

whatever of rest our weary souls have known: for whatever clearer sense we have had of the kind mercy of our God, seen in the gracious face and the kindest heart of Him who died for us upon the tree. God be thanked for all that we have known of blessed elevation above the little fretting concerns of sense and time; for whatever glimpse of the perfect peace of perfect faith and trust in Jesus has come like sunshine upon our care-worn hearts. But now, brethren, that we have sung our hymn, we must go forth as to the mount of Olives. We must take again to the rough and perplexing path. We must go forth from the Mount of Ordinances, into the worry of daily life again.

It is but for a short space that, by the make of our being, our best and purest feelings and enjoyments last: and the meditations of a Communion Sunday must soon be exchanged for ordinary toils. Each of you knows the task that awaits

him: the labour, the sorrow, the parting, the trouble, —the rough hill that we must set ourselves to climb, after we quit these walls. We are going out to duty, to temptation, to care and sorrow: perhaps to bereavement and death. Yet it is very meet and right that even in that prospect we should do as our Saviour and His apostles did in presence of one far darker; and lift up the voice of praise, of joyful praise, as well as draw humbly near to our Father's footstool with the voice of prayer. It is meet that we should heartily bless God for His mercies past, as we ask that He would bless us in time to come. Yea, it is meet that we should take encouragement from the past, to hope for the future: that we should trust that merciful Saviour who gave us a peaceful hour at His Table, to give us His own peace, not like the world's, in our pilgrimage path: that we should praise Almighty God at the close of our Communion Service, in words which our Saviour and His apostles

sang after this Sacrament was instituted at the first. 'The Lord hath been mindful of us; He will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel, He will bless the house of Aaron: He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great!'

The greater the peace and quiet we have known in the breaking of that bread which means so much, the greater our regret that the Communion season must pass away so soon. And it is well that we are thus permitted to blend the words of thankfulness and faith. When our Redeemer arose, His parting hymn over, and went forth to the mount of Olives, *He* knew all things that were coming to Him: but when we go out from this church to-day, our Communion Service finished, not one of us knows certainly what things await us. Doubtless each has his hill to climb: his cross to bear. Having sung our hymn, which may be to any of us the last, we are now going forth to all that lies before us. Perhaps in some of

you, even as you sang your hymn, there were the silent anticipations of something to which you must go out when you depart hence. Some may feel within the premonitions of decaying strength and life: the mortal disease, that must prevail at length, may already have begun its work: and that faintness, that weariness, that little shooting pang, may tell you that your rough, up-hill path, may be that of bodily suffering, leading painfully to the grave. Some of you may be looking forward to difficulties and complications in business,—painful, perplexing things to go through: to trials as regards your worldly estate: some may hardly know how the winter fire, how food and raiment, are to be provided: some may be anxiously thinking of the training of their little children, or of how their children of more advanced years are to be provided with an aim in life. All these things may lie before you: 'In the world ye shall have tribulation,' were the Saviour's words even to His own.

And do not fancy that it is wrong if even on the Mount of Ordinances you can hardly shut these things out from your remembrance: do not fancy that the merciful Saviour, Who 'knoweth our frame' so well, will heartlessly shut His eyes to facts which of necessity take up so great a part in the thoughts of His own. Even singing their parting hymn, I doubt not that the dull dead weight of the remembrance of whither they must go out when it was finished, was pressing upon every heart round that first table of communion. We do not sit down at the Communion Table to forget that the wilderness lies before us, but to get grace and strength for our wilderness-way. It is just because all these toils and cares are in our path, that we need so much that spiritual food of which we have to-day partaken: it is just because the hill we may have to climb is so rough and bleak, that it befits us so well to recall the loving-kindnesses of our God in the years past, and to draw comfort from them for

the future, in our parting hymn. What said God's angel to Elijah, before he began his forty days' journey to Horeb? Not, Arise and eat, and forget all about your journey in the mean while: No, it was, 'Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee.' And just because the journey before you and me, dear friends, is too great for us: just because the hill before us is too steep: just because we never can go through all these toils and trials and temptations and sorrows that are waiting for us beyond that door, in any strength or wisdom of our own: just for such reasons have we been seeking this day to feed upon Christ, and to go back to the world strong in His strength; and seeking from this Pisgah-height of purer spirituality to catch such views of the better Canaan, as we may carry with us through dusty miles over the desert, cheering us in a world which is not our rest, with happy foretastes of the world of perfect peace we are going to! Oh that the spiritual

nourishment we have this day received may sustain us better than the angels' food did the prophet! We will not go forth in our own strength: we go in simple trust on promised grace,—grace that can suffice for all that can ever come. We look for that Blessed Spirit, Sanctifier and Comforter, Who, the parting Saviour promised, should come and fill His place. We wait for the guidance of that Heavenly Teacher: we lean upon that Almighty arm. For now the bread has been broken: the wine has been poured out: we have once again partaken of the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ: and so, having sung our hymn, in God's grace and strength we 'go out to the mount of Olives!'

Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will,

working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ: to Whom be glory, both now and ever. Amen.

Let us pray.

O BLESSED and Merciful God, we return to the footstool of Thy throne of grace through Thy dear Son and (as we humbly trust) by Thy Blessed Spirit, now to pray that Thou wouldst follow with Thy rich and effectual blessing the dispensation of word and sacrament in this place on this day. All praise and thanks be unto Thee, Heavenly Father, that Thou hast suffered us at this time to compass the Holy Table, and show forth our Redeemer's death, feeding by faith on His shed blood and broken body: Graciously accept our dedication of ourselves, in so far as it was well-intended and sincere: and pardon the much unworthiness which was mingled with our holy things. Help us, in time coming, by the grace

of Thy Blessed Spirit, to live mindful of our high profession: always bearing about in soul and body the dying of Thy dear Son. And grant that the spiritual food received on the Mount of Ordinances may be blest to strengthen us for our work and warfare through many coming days.

Gracious God, Father of all, Who though knowing that we are not worthy to pray even for ourselves, permittest and requirest us likewise to pray for others, hearken to us now interceding through Christ Jesus for all our brethren of mankind. We pray specially for those who specially need Thy kind remembrance: the sick, the sorrowful, the destitute, the dying: all who are in any kind of danger or peril, at home or abroad, by land or by sea. Be Thou, we pray Thee, the Shield of the stranger, the Help of the widow, the Father of the fatherless, the Friend of the friendless. But we more earnestly pray, as we most heartily wish, that Thou wouldst

grant to all that knowledge of Thee and of Jesus Christ which is life eternal. Prosper all the measures which are now in operation for disseminating the knowledge of the glorious gospel throughout heathen lands: and grant that the time may soon arrive, when incense and a pure offering shall be offered unto Thee from the rising to the setting sun: when Thy kingdom shall come, and Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

We pray that the cause of religion, pure and undefiled, may prosper more and more amongst ourselves: throughout all ranks of the community, amid all sorts and conditions of men. For the sake of all, we pray that Thy blessing may rest upon the Church which Thou hast planted in this land. Be Thou for a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her: and grant that no weapon formed against her may ever prosper. May her ministers be faithful to proclaim the truth, and wise to win souls:

and while one plants and another waters, do Thou Thyself give the increase. We pray for the Holy Catholic Church of Christ: for all true Christians everywhere, by whatever name known among men. Prosper and multiply the number of such manifold. And grant that now, as in ancient days it hath been, and in all days it ought to be, the world may take knowledge of all true members of Thy Church by the mutual love they bear.

We pray for our native land, in all her interests, sacred and civil. Do Thou bless and long preserve Thy Servant our Sovereign the Queen: Albert Edward Prince of Wales, the Princess of Wales, and all the other members of the royal family. Counsel our Queen's counsellors, and teach her senators wisdom: and guide them to such measures as Thou Thyself wilt bless, for the safety, honour, and welfare of this nation. We pray for all rulers, judges, and magistrates: specially for the magistrates of this

city, and those who sit in council with them. Grant that they bear not the sword in vain: but be a terror to evil-doers and the praise of such as do well. We pray for all sorts and conditions of men: that the rich be rich in faith, and the poor poor in spirit: that the young may remember their Creator, and all their latter end. Specially we pray for the people of this congregation, and of this city and parish: grant that Thy fear be in every heart, and Thy worship in every home. Remember graciously, we humbly entreat, Thy servants in the Eldership: reward them for their work and labour of love: grant that they be ever an ensample to the flock, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

And, rejoicing in the communion of saints, we thank and bless Thee for all Thy servants departed this world in Thy faith and love, who are now at rest with Thee in Paradise: humbly beseeching Thee so to make us partakers of their faith and good example,

that we finally fail not to come to the same blessed and peaceful rest.

Be Thou with us, singing our parting hymn of praise. Teach and enable us so to do with true devotion of heart. Dismiss us with Thy blessing: carry us in safety to our homes: grant that we may spend the remainder of this day and of life in Thy fear and service. Guide us by Thy counsel while we live, and afterward receive us to Thy glory: and all this we ask for our Blessed Redeemer's sake. Amen.

After prayer, the Nunc Dimittis is sung, as rendered metrically in Paraphrase XXXVIII.

8 Now, Lord! according to Thy word,
let me in peace depart;
Mine eyes have Thy salvation seen,
And gladness fills my heart.

9 At length my arms embrace my Lord,
Now let their vigour cease;

At last my eyes my Saviour see,
now let them close in peace.

10 This great salvation, long prepared,
and now disclosed to view,
Hath proved Thy love was constant still,
and promises were true.

11 That Sun I now behold, whose light
shall heathen darkness chase,
And rays of brightest glory pour
around Thy chosen race.

The Parting Benediction.

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord: And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen.

THE EVENING SERVICE.

The congregation being re-assembled, the Worship of God is resumed by singing to His praise.

Hymn I.

HOLY, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

2 Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

3 Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see,
Only Thou art holy: there is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

4 Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Let us pray.

O COME, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Lord, we cry unto Thee: Make haste unto us: Give ear unto our voice, when we cry unto Thee.

Let our prayer be set forth before Thee as in-

cense; and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created. Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty: Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. All the blessed spirits and souls of the righteous cast their crowns before Thy throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever. O Blessed and Eternal Jesus, Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign with Thee for ever. Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever. We are not worthy to appear in

Thy presence, before Whom angels hide their faces: Yet, seeing that we have a great High Priest Who is passed into the heavens and intercedes for us there, we now come boldly though humbly to the Throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Most Holy and Eternal God, Lord and Sovereign of all creatures, we humbly present to Thy Divine Majesty ourselves: our souls and bodies, our thoughts and words, our actions and intentions: to be disposed by Thee to Thy glory, to be blessed by Thy providence, to be guided by Thy counsel, and afterward that our bodies and souls may be received into glory: For nothing can perish that is under Thy care, and the great adversary cannot devour what is Thy portion, nor take it out of Thy hand. But as for us, we are not worthy to be called Thy servants, much less are we worthy to be Thy sons: For we are sinful and evil, lovers of the things of this world and for-

getful of the things of God: proud and envious, greedy of sin and impatient of reproof: desirous to seem holy, and negligent of being so: disturbed with anger, and disordered by a whole body of sin and death. We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness is as filthy rags. We all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. We are carnal, and under sin; and there dwelleth in us no good thing: for the good we would we do not, and the evil we would not, that we do. We consent unto the law that it is good: but we see another law in our members, warring against the law of our mind, and enslaving us to the law of sin. Wretched we should be if left to ourselves: who could deliver us from the body of this death? But we thank God through Jesus Christ, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. O God, Thy goodness leadeth us to repentance: O give us true repentance, and recover us from the snare of

the Devil, who are carried captive at his will. Lord, pardon all our sins for our Blessed Redeemer's sake. Thou Who didst die for us, Holy Jesus, save and deliver us. O Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot, Who hast redeemed us with Thy precious blood, wash away our sins, and blot them out of Thy remembrance: purifying our souls with the tears of penitence and the blood of the cross. Deliver us out of the mire that we sink not: O deliver us from them that hate us, and out of the deep waters. Let not the floods swallow us up, neither the pit shut her mouth upon us. Remit and pardon the manifold sins, negligences, and ignorances which are grief to us, and offence of heart: And do Thou, Who alone on earth hast power to forgive sins, say to the soul of each one of us, Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

We earnestly pray that, by the indwelling of Thy Holy Spirit in our hearts, we may find grace in Thy

sight, to have grace, so as to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Let us not come short of Thy grace, nor neglect it, nor fall from it: but stir it up, increase and grow in it, and abide in it to the end of our lives. Perfect in us what is lacking of Thy gifts: Help our unbelief, establish our hope; and Thou that quenchest not the smoking flax, enkindle in our hearts the flame of divine love. Shed abroad Thy love in our hearts, so that we may love Thee; our friends in Thee; our enemies for Thee. O Thou that givest grace to the humble-minded, give us grace to be humble-minded. As we would that men should do to us, so enable us to do to them. And do Thou bless us, gracious God, in our calling to all such purposes as Thou shalt choose for us, or employ us in. Relieve us in all our sorrows: make our bed in sickness: give us patience in troubles, confidence in Thee, and grace to call on Thee in all temptations. Be Thou our Guide in all

our actions: our Protector in all dangers: Give us a healthful body, and a clear understanding: a spirit sanctified and just, charitable and humble, religious and contented. Let not our life be miserable and wretched, nor our name stained with sin or shame; but let our condition be blessed, and our conversation useful to our neighbours and pleasing unto Thee. Guide us, O God, in all the chances and vicissitudes of this world; that in all things which shall happen, we may maintain an evenness and tranquillity of spirit: that our souls may be wholly resigned to Thy Divine will and pleasure. Do Thou fix our thoughts, desires, and affections upon heavenly things: Grant that we may ever live in the faith and fear of the gospel: so that, when our bodies shall lie down in their bed of darkness, our souls may pass into the regions of light, and abide with Thee for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

O Eternal God, who hast made all things for

man and man for Thy glory, sanctify our body and soul, our thoughts and intentions, our words and actions; that all we think and speak and do may be by us designed to the glory of Thy Holy Name. Let no pride or self-seeking, no covetousness or revenge, no little ends or low imagination, pollute our spirit or unhallow any of our words and deeds: but let our body be the servant of our spirit, and both body and spirit the servants of Thy dear Son: that doing all things for Thy glory here, we may be partakers of Thy glory hereafter: through Jesus Christ Thy Blessed Son our Lord.

We thank and bless Thee, gracious Giver of helpful and pleasant gospel-ordinances, for the great privileges of a day of high communion: and being again assembled in Thy holy place, we look for Thy merciful presence, according to Thy word. Thou hast promised, Almighty God, that in all places where Thou recordest Thy Name, Thou wilt come

unto Thy people and bless them: Thou hast said, faithful Saviour, that wherever two or three shall be gathered together in Thy Name, Thou wouldst be there in the midst of them: O remember at this time this word unto Thy servants, on which Thou hast caused Thy servants to hope.

And now, Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, Who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, we beseech Thee to have compassion upon our infirmities; and those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord: to Whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Then is read the Lesson from the Old Testament.

Isaiah LX.

1 ARISE, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at *thy* side.

5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

6 The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.

7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.

8 Who *are* these *that* fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

9 Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

10 And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.

11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that *men* may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and *that* their kings *may be* brought.

12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, *those* nations shall be utterly wasted.

13 The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

15 Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through *thee*, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

16 Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD *am* thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

17 For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

20 Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

21 Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

22 A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

After which is sung Hymn CC. (The Te Deum).

WE praise Thee, O God: we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.

All the earth doth worship Thee: the Father everlasting.

To Thee all Angels cry aloud: the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.

To Thee Cherubin, and Seraphin: continually do cry,

Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Sabaoth;

Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty : of Thy Glory.

The glorious company of the Apostles : praise Thee.

The goodly fellowship of the Prophets : praise Thee.

The noble army of Martyrs : praise Thee.

The holy Church throughout all the world : doth acknowledge Thee;

The Father : of an infinite Majesty;

Thine honourable, true : and only Son;

Also the Holy Ghost : the Comforter.

Thou art the King of Glory : O Christ.

Thou art the everlasting Son : of the Father.

When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man : Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.

When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death : Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God : in the Glory of the Father.

We believe that Thou shalt come : to be our Judge.

We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants : whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.

Make them to be numbered with Thy saints : in glory everlasting.

O Lord, save Thy people : and bless Thine heritage.

Govern them : and lift them up for ever.

Day by day : we magnify Thee ;

And we worship Thy name : ever world without end.

Vouchsafe, O Lord : to keep us this day without sin.

O Lord, have mercy upon us : have mercy upon us.

O Lord, let Thy mercy lighten upon us : as our trust is in Thee.

O Lord, in Thee have I trusted : let me never be confounded.

The Lesson from the New Testament. S. John XVII.

1 THESE words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men

which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept

them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that

they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known

thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it:* that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Then is sung Hymn CLXVI.

1 JERUSALEM the golden,
With milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation
Sink heart and voice oppress.
I know not, O, I know not,
What joys await us there;
What radiancy of glory,
What light beyond compare!

2 They stand, those halls of Sion,
All jubilant with song,
And bright with many an angel,
And all the martyr throng.

The Prince is ever in them;
The daylight is serene;
The pastures of the blessèd
Are decked in glorious sheen.

3 There is the throne of David;
And there, from care released,
The shout of them that triumph,
The song of them that feast;
And they who, with their Leader,
Have conquered in the fight,
For ever and for ever
Are clad in robes of white.

4 *O sweet and blessèd country,*
The home of God's elect!
O sweet and blessèd country,
That eager hearts expect!
Jesus, in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest:

Who art, with God the Father,
And Spirit, ever blest.

Prayer before Sermon.

PREVENT us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour, and further us with Thy continual help; that in the preaching and hearing of Thy Word, as in all our works begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy Name, and finally by Thy mercy obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Father which art in heaven; Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON.

THE SAVIOUR'S PRAYER FOR THE FIRST COMMUNICANTS.

I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.—ST JOHN XVII. 15.

THESE words deserve our special attention on an evening like this. It is not merely the kindness and the wisdom that shine through them, that I should wish you to observe. But when we look at them, we find that there is a great principle involved in them; and a principle which runs through all God's dealings with His children and servants. God's plan with His Christian people, is not to withdraw them from danger, but to shield them in it: not to remove them from labour, but to strengthen them for it: not to keep them entirely free from sorrow, care, and trial, but rather to comfort under these, and turn all these into

a heavenly discipline. Even worldly wisdom can see that it is a nobler thing to strengthen the back, than to lighten the burden: it is worthier to give more power to the arm, than to lessen the work it has to do: it is better to strengthen the ship till it shall be able to face the hurricane, than to keep it always sailing upon a breezeless sea. In many respects, and for many reasons, it is better to bring up the strength to do and bear, than to let down the standard of what is to be done and borne. And so the Christian principle is, that we must labour to enter into rest,—that through much tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God,—that we must pass to that country where there is no darkness of night, through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

Our Blessed Saviour, as all here well know, after addressing His apostles in that most beautiful discourse which is recorded in the three chapters which precede that in which my text stands, lifted up His

eyes to heaven, and poured out that kind, wise, comforting Intercessory Prayer. He is about to leave His chosen friends in a world of sin and sorrow: and He thinks mainly of them, and not of His own approaching agony and death. How often have we all lingered upon these wonderful words; wherein the Redeemer asks that so much of good and so much of glory may be the appointed portion of those He is leaving behind! He says much of an evil world in which they were to be left: a world that would hate His friends because they were not of it: a world in which they never would find the rest, the holiness, the happiness, the home, which He prayed they might yet enjoy: a world from which He was Himself going soon away; and from which it might have seemed a blessed and a happy thing that they should all go together. But the Saviour's purpose and the Saviour's prayer were not like *that*. He did not wish to withdraw the labourer from the burden and heat

of the day: He did not intend to remove the soldier from the field on which he must fight the good fight of faith: it was no plan of His to take away the apostles from a world in which they were to preach the gospel to perishing souls, and to testify of Christ's work and resurrection. But yet the wind must be tempered to the shorn lamb: He would not cast them forth upon this world at its worst, to bear the brunt of whatever storm might blow. The prayer was as kind and thoughtful as if it had asked that they might enter into heaven at once: but still it went upon that great principle on which all God's dealings with His children go. The Redeemer prayed for His apostles, and prayed with all the tenderness of the dying father who is leaving his little children behind: yet His words are, 'I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil!'

You see, there were the two good things which

the Redeemer might have prayed for. He wished well to His disciples: and the great thought which to beings like us is implied in wishing well and in being well, is Deliverance from Evil. The first and most obvious way was by removing them altogether from a world of evil: and if there had been no good end for them to serve by remaining in this world, *that* might have been the better way. The second way, a way demanding greater skill, greater wisdom, greater power,—was to let them stay in this evil world,—let them remain where they would be surrounded by evil, pressed by evil, assailed on every side by evil,—and yet to keep them from it all. And *that* would be the God-like way. *That* would be the way which would consist with all the Almighty's ways of dealing with His believing people below. And *that* would be the way, too, in which every good result would be secured that would follow from their remaining in this world. There was a work for the

apostles to do here. There were weighty reasons why it was desirable that they should remain in this world. They could not be spared, just then. It would have been sad for you and me, had they gone when their Master went. And so Christ expressly declared which of the two good wishes He would wish: which of the two good things He would ask for. Not the first; but the second. Not calm; but strength to bear the storm. Not entire removal from danger; but safety amid it all. Not to leave this earth; but to wait and do their work in it. 'I pray *not* That thou shouldst take them out of the world, *but* that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil!'

Now you will easily see that there was weighty reason why the apostles should not at that time have been taken out of the world. No doubt, at the first glance, you would say that it would have been a happy thing for themselves, if they had been spared

all the toils and sufferings, the persecution and the martyrdom, which awaited them after the departure of their Lord: and no doubt, had it been left for themselves to decide, they would rather have shrunk away from the strife, and entered at once upon the rest. But where would have been the Christian Church, if the men had been removed from this world who were to plant and train it? The world could not spare them: God had a great work for them to accomplish here. The New Testament was yet to write: the Holy Spirit was to descend: the gospel was to be preached by them to many, who should believe through their word. For our sake, my hearers, it was needful that they should remain here when their Lord departed. It was needful for the diffusion of the knowledge of the holy religion which the Redeemer lived and died to teach: it was needful to save the great work of redemption, which had just been accomplished, from being lost in forget-

fulness. The foundation had been laid, and now it was for them to build upon it. And even for their own sake, it was better that they should face the battle than fly from it: their heavenly crown was growing brighter for all the warfare and all the toil they underwent. O surely a happier welcome and a more glorious place would wait them, when at the close of their allotted pilgrimage they left this world, than would have waited them had they left it then!

But the apostles, not at that moment to be taken out of the world, have been taken out of it long ago: *their* race is run and *their* warfare is ended; and they are once more with their Lord at last. And though it never can be a thing devoid of interest to trace the why and wherefore, so far as we can trace them, of every arrangement made by the Almighty, still you would say that the question of the reasons why the apostles were to remain when their Master went, is now, so to speak, out of date: it is comparatively of

little practical moment to justify a state of things which no longer exists. A greater and more pressing interest appears to invest the text, where we generalize the principle implied in it; and regard it not as something said of the apostles only, but as something said concerning all believers. And although our Lord did not in express words say as much of all believers, you need not be told that by the arrangements of His providence He is daily telling us that His plan is not to remove true Christians from this world, but to keep them from the evil that is in this world. It need not be said that, to the believer, 'to die is gain:' and 'to depart and be with Christ is far better' than to toil and suffer here, even apart from the fearful risk of finally falling away that hangs over us so long as we continue here, exposed to temptations from within and from without. And so, there can be no doubt at all, that to the Christian himself it might be a happy thing, once he was assur-

edly in Christ, to be 'taken out of this world,' and finally delivered from all its 'evil.' Heaven is better than earth; and assuredly it would be gain to exchange earth for heaven. But it is not to be so. The best we can hope is to be left for God's time in this evil world, but to be kept from its evil: and surely it will be interesting for us to think this evening why we are to be left upon a stormy ocean when we might be taken into the haven at once. Why is it that Christ's prayer for all His people may be understood to be that stated in the text? And why is it, therefore, that in all but the most extraordinary circumstances, it is hardly justifiable for the believer to offer for himself any other prayer than that it may please his God to take him indeed when His good time comes; but meanwhile, if not to 'take him out of the world,' then to 'keep him from the evil'?

Let it be said, that the phrase 'to take out of the world' may be variously understood. No

doubt, what Jesus meant when He said these words, was the removal by death: it was the taking away from earth to heaven. No doubt *that* is the first thought which would suggest itself when we apply this text to believers now. And so, understanding it thus in the mean time, can you not see why it is better that believers should be spared in this world but kept from its evil, than that they should be taken out of this world at once? What kind of world would this be if all the true Christians were taken out of it? Very truly has it been said that 'many good people are spared to live, because they cannot be spared to die.' This world could not do without the true believers in Christ: they are the salt of the earth, that save the human race from utter corruption. Not to speak of the vast effect of direct religious instruction: not to speak of the many schemes of usefulness, and institutions of charity, which are founded on Christianity or they have no foundation

—which never were in this world till Christianity came to it: not to speak of the direct doings of Christianity, as such: I say that you cannot even conceive the indirect influence which Christianity and Christian people wield even over such as never pretend to be Christians. The world would become a den of thieves, a cage of savage wild beasts, if all the Christians were taken out of it! This dark earth needs all the light *they* can yield it! For God to take His own people out of this world, would just mean that God had given up this world,—had cast it off, and would care for it no more. It would just mean that hell was to begin below, and begin at once. When sometimes we hear it said that Christianity has proved somewhat of a failure—has not improved mankind so much as with its high pretensions it ought to have done—it is forgotten, surely, how much worse men might possibly and would certainly have been, but for the constant presence among them

of this great spiritual disinfectant. And not only may we say that for this world's sake it is needful that true believers should not be taken out of it: we may affirm that it is needful for God's honour that they should for a while continue here. God's glory can be vindicated in either of two ways; by the punishment of the guilty, or by the salvation of the guilty: but He has chosen that it shall be vindicated in the milder way; and so He is 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' So you see that God's glory and man's salvation are bound up together: not without meaning does the first answer of the Shorter Catechism combine the two great ends of man's happiness and God's honour; telling us that the great purpose of our being here is to 'glorify God AND enjoy Him for ever.' Whatever serves the one end serves the other: whatever conduces to the one thing conduces to the other too. The utter perdition of mankind,

which would necessarily follow from the removal of God's people from this world, would mean that God's greatest work, *that* work which had cost Him most thought, and time, and work, yea, and suffering through the medium of flesh and blood, had proved a wretched failure. What wonder, then, that our Lord, in the close prospect of His agony and His death, should expressly disavow any desire for that which might indeed save His people from a few days or years of trial, but which would make His agony and death prove to have been all in vain! What wonder if, as He reckoned up the measure in which man's salvation and God's glory were bound up and linked with His people's continuance on earth, He should exclaim almost with the hurried air of one who fears that what He has already said should be understood as meaning more than He intends,—'I pray *not* that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil!'

But I have said to you that when we speak of being taken out of this world, or of withdrawing from this world, the phrase need not of necessity mean that we should quit the world by death. There have been men who have turned their back upon this world even while they wore its earth around them. Such a thing may be, as 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot,' to grow, without dying, as dead to the world as though we breathed its air no more. Like 'the stricken deer, that left the herd,' men have broken away from the business and bustle of time, and thought that in the monastic shade they could more perfectly serve the Redeemer, and live more completely above the things of sense. It is not straining the meaning of this text to affirm, that it, along with a host of others, teaches us that such is not our Master's will. For what did He ask, for those for whom He asked His best? Not to be 'taken out of the world,' but to be 'kept from the evil.'

Not that we should shrink away from our part in that worldly work which must be done by some, but that we should see to it that our daily life shall be hallowed by Christian principle, and that 'wherein we are called, therein we abide with God.' There is no calling, so it be a calling not in itself a sinful one, in which we may not keep our religion by us. I need not say, that in this country we are exposed to no temptation to fly from common business to such religious retreats as I have named: and I do not know that in the case of any in whom the mind is not truly morbid, there will now-a-days be found any actual impulse to retire from the active duties of life for religion's sake. Few, very few, not under the influence of temporary depression or excitement, will seriously think of turning away from an honest worldly calling because they think it is not a Christian's part to be there. The difficulty is in theory rather than in practice: it is rather in the head than in the life.

Yet no doubt there are many people who have in their mind a lurking fancy, that there is something not religious in common drudgery and care. And we see this fancy looking out in the way in which people divide affairs into sacred and secular; and talk of a man's worldly duties and his religious duties, as if these were things quite different, and indeed in some degree opposed to each other. People think it is religious work to pray, to read the Bible, to go to church: but it is worldly work to dig your garden, or to plough your field, or to walk down to the Exchange, or to go into Court. They have, in fact, a lurking fancy which this text shows is wrong, that religion consists in getting 'out of the world.' Nay, it is not so. Religion abides not in going out of the world, but in 'keeping from the evil.' An action or a life is religious not from anything in itself, but according as it is done from religious principle. A man may pray, and read the Bible, and go to

church, all with such a spirit as shall make it all thoroughly worldly work: and, on the other hand, he may dig, and plough, and transact mercantile affairs, with such a spirit as shall make it all thoroughly religious work. I do not deny that in a fancy picture, it may look the finer thing that the believer should be given up exclusively to his Christian duties, standing apart from and elevated above the little prosaic cares of this world, and 'having his conversation in heaven.' And so the ancient Church held it, that it better befitted those whose souls were to be much exercised in sacred thoughts and duties, to have nothing to do with sublunary matters at all. But all this is a wrong view of things. All this goes on the false supposition, that you cannot be 'kept from the evil,' unless you are 'taken out of the world.' Surely it is Platonism rather than Christianity to hold that there is anything necessarily debasing or materializing about the cares of daily life. All these

cares take their character from the spirit with which we pass through them. The simple French monk, five hundred years since, who acted as cook to his brethren, indicated the Christian's true path when he wrote, 'I put my little cake on the fire for the sake of Christ:' and the quaint Anglican divine and poet, more gracefully, has shown how, as the eye may either look *on* glass, or look *through* it, we may look no farther than the daily task, or may look through it to something nobler beyond:

> Teach me, my God and King,
> In all things Thee to see;
> And what I do in anything,
> To do it as for Thee.
> All may of Thee partake:
> Nothing can be so mean,
> Which with this tincture, *for Thy sake*,
> Will not grow bright and clean.

And so you see that in this sense, too, so long as God shall please to continue us in this life, our desire and prayer ought to be, not that we may be

entirely removed from worldly business, but that we may be kept from any evil which attaches to it,—so that its cares may not choke the word in our heart,—so that though in the world we may not be of it,—so that we may not grow *worldly* in that sense in which to be worldly unfits the soul for a better world beyond the grave. Do not think that in your ordinary work you may not be serving God: do not be surprised though you, a Christian man, should have to hold much intercourse with people who are not Christians, and who if they go on as they are going will surely end in woe. It would be a pleasanter thing, indeed, you would say, if you never needed to speak at all to any man who seems to be advancing to perdition: it would be a happier thing, you might fancy, to hold the Jerusalem above ever in your eye and in your heart: but that is not your Saviour's will. 'I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep

them from the evil.' Better for the world that it should be so: better for the world's business, better for the world's society: it is hard to reckon how much the presence of true believers does to keep up the standard of even mercantile morality: and it is hard to say how much it does to purify the tone even of that worldly society in which all mention of such solemn truths as that man is a dying creature, and that man is a sinful creature, is a thing forbidden by canons which, though unwritten and unspoken, are yet perfectly understood. Better for God's glory and God's cause on earth, as we have already seen: and now let it be added, better for believers themselves. It has been maintained that such is the nobility of conflict and struggle, and such the accession of happiness in the other world which is allotted to the soul which has 'overcome,' that it would be better, if it were given to the Christian to decide for himself,—better to remain in this world, only kept from its evil,

than even to leave it by death and enter into heaven. *That* we dare not say: but *that* we need not debate; since it is agreed on all hands that it is not for us to decide whether or not we shall in that solemn fashion quit this world. Whether better for ourselves or not, there can be no doubt that it is for us to remain patiently in this world in so far as *that* means that we shall breathe its air till we are called away by death. But when we think of the other way of leaving the world, the voluntary way, the way by entire withdrawal from worldly business and society; —then, indeed, we can venture to affirm without doubt that even for the believer himself it is better, far better, that he should not seek to do so. He cannot do it, without flying in the face of the manifest intention of his Maker: he cannot do it, without cowardly shrinking away from the work and warfare which God set him to do: And all the cares of even the busiest life may be so sanctified by the Holy

Spirit as to make them work together for the Christian's eternal weal. It will be but a poor and sickly type of Christianity which will grow up in the hot-house atmosphere of entire withdrawal from active life. The mind grows morbid in too much retirement; and it is needful to maintain its healthy tone that we should bear the brunt of the rough realities of life. What monstrous errors in doctrine, yea, what fearful lapses into sin, have come of men fancying that they knew better than Christ, and turning His prayer to the very opposite of His meaning, saying virtually, 'We pray that Thou wouldst take us out of the world, for thus only canst Thou keep us from the evil.' No: rude winds blow away unwholesome damps: the cheek will be pale which no cold blast has ever visited: the frame will be weak and nerveless which has not been strung by constant toil. We do not want a hot-house religion: we want what will stand the daily wear of life. It was the

purpose of the Author of our holy religion to give us in it something that should brace the nerve and muscle alike of the body and the soul. And so I say to you who have come from the Holy Table, Do your work, your daily work: do it faithfully and honestly and diligently: and comfort yourself with the firm belief, that if you do it in a Christian spirit, it is a Christian work you do. If you do it, mind, in a Christian spirit—everything turns upon *that*. All that the believer does should be sacred work, being done for the Redeemer's sake. But remember that you are surrounded with temptations: the Evil One himself, and all that evil in which he delights, are always on the watch, ever seeking to lead you wrong. Even your daily work, though right and honest, may become a temptation, if you are led to give to it more care and earnestness than you give to working out the salvation of your immortal soul. Yea, the home where your best affec-

tions centre, and the dear ones you love, may become a sore temptation, if you are led to put down God from the throne of your heart and to place them there: for they have grown to be idols then! How earnest should be our prayer, that we may be 'kept from the evil,' seeing that there is scarce a thing in this world from which evil influences may not come! The very Communion-table, the very house of God, may become a snare to us, if we make sure, from the regularity of our appearance there, that we are better and safer than God knows us to be! Yet be encouraged, believers: *you* were not forgotten in your Master's gracious prayer. He knew the world in which He was leaving His own: He knew it was an evil world: but He knew that its evil was not so strong but that the Blessed Spirit could bring them safely through. He was anxious for them,—kindly anxious,—but, after all, not much afraid. He was content to run the risk, and He left them behind

Him. 'I pray,' He said, '*not* that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, *but* that Thou shouldst (and Thou canst) keep them from the evil!'

Now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy: To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

After Sermon is sung Hymn CXLVIII.

1 ABIDE with me! fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see:
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!

3 Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word;
But as Thou dwell'st with Thy disciples, Lord,
Familiar, condescending, patient, free,
Come, not to sojourn, but abide, with me.

4 Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea:
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.

5 Thou on my head in early youth didst smile;
And, though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,
Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee:
On to the close, O Lord, abide with me!

6 I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!

7 I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness:

Where is death's sting? where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

8 Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee:
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

Let us pray.

Once again, merciful Hearer of prayer, behold us returned to Thy footstool through Thy Son and by Thy Blessed Spirit, now to entreat before we depart that Thy effectual blessing be on all our worship and service this day. Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears may through Thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts that they may bring

forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honour and praise of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessed God, Father of all, Whose will is that Thy people, offering prayer for the relief of their own necessities, fail not to make intercession for all men, hearken to us humbly praying that in Thy great mercy Thou wouldst remember and visit all whom Thou hast made. Comfort all that mourn: spare useful lives: prepare the dying for the great change: and hasten that blessed and predicted day when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither any more pain.

And meanwhile, rejoicing (as we are permitted to do) in the communion of saints, we thank and bless Thee for all Thy servants departed this world in Thy fear and love, who are now at rest with Thee in Paradise: humbly beseeching Thee so to make us partakers of their faith and good example, that we finally

fail not to come to the same blessed and peaceful rest.

Almighty Father, Searcher of the heart, Who knowest what evil cleaves to our best feelings and purest services: Who art well aware that coming to Thy holy place to join in Thy worship, we cannot leave the evil heart behind us, and our thoughts will wander away: mercifully accept that in our worship which was well-intended and sincere: and as for the unworthiness mingled, pardon this, as Thou pardonest all, for Thy dear Son's sake.

Touch our hearts, we humbly ask, with true devotion, as we sing Thy praise before we depart: and dismiss us with Thy blessing. Defend us from all dangers of the night: and keep us through all the days and nights of the appointed pilgrimage, till we come to our Father's House for ever. All which we ask for our Blessed Redeemer's sake: to Whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and evermore. Amen.

Then is sung Hymn CLXXIII (The Evening Hymn).

ALL praise to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light;
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,
Beneath Thine own almighty wings!

2 Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son,
The ill that I this day have done;
That, with the world, myself, and Thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.

3 Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed;
To die, that this vile body may
Rise glorious at the awful day.

4 O may my soul on Thee repose,
And may sweet sleep mine eyelids close;
Sleep that may me more vigorous make,
To serve my God when I awake.

5 When in the night I sleepless lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply;
Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,
No powers of darkness me molest.

6 Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The Parting Benediction.

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord: And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen.

DISCOURSE I.

I.

*AN ACT OF SELF-EXAMINATION.**

'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.'—
2 Cor. xiii. 5.

ALL searching inquiries are anxious things, to the people whose doings and character are to be inquired into. There are many persons, not bad in the main, who have an uneasy feeling that they might not come very well out of a really searching investigation. Of course, if all your doings are straight and fair, you have no need to be afraid though all the world knows what you are doing. But it would be to some a very startling discovery, that for the last six weeks there had been a detective dogging their steps, they being unaware of it.

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* Town Church, St Andrews : Nov. 10, 1872.

It is in human nature, in average human nature, to shrink from examinations. Not many middle-aged folk would like to go to a skilful doctor, and have their bodily state thoroughly looked into, to see if heart, and brain, and lungs, and nerves, were sound. Many people fear that such an examination might bring out something seriously amiss; and so they would rather evade it. This may be cowardly, but it is common. There are human beings who would rather shut their eyes, if they fear that on opening them they would see what they would rather not see.

There are places, and there are persons, in whose case the mention of an examination suggests something quite different. The word comes with its special University sense. You think of a number of young men, with anxious hearts, seated, pretty far apart from one another, at an uninviting table, each man with his writing materials: and each man, too,

taking his first look at a printed paper of questions; some unexpectedly easy, and some of heart-sinking difficulty: very much perhaps depending on the result of that examination. Those who have passed through many such, will not cease to remember that they were very anxious, and sometimes very humbling occasions. Sometimes a depth of unsuspected ignorance is brought out, that makes one fear that little good has come of past hard work,—that makes one tremble for the future. And where only through such testing times can entrance be found to one's profession, we can remember the thankful elation with which one thought, when the last was fairly over, that one would never need to be examined any more.

This is an age of examination: and of advancement through examination. Friendless talent and industry have fair play at last. Patronage, happily, goes for very little now, at least in this country,

whether in Church or State. Happily, that is, for the hard-working and deserving: for patronage means, broadly, that a man be advanced not because he deserves it, but because he has influential friends. And examination, rightly conducted, is a very testing thing. It may not test everything, but it tests what it meddles with. Those who object to it are for the most part people who know that they themselves, or their relations, could not stand any examination at all.

Now, looking at my text, and thinking of that grave examination to which it invites us, we are made to feel what a special examination *that* is: special in various respects. It is easy work to examine in intellectual attainment. It is easy to find out whether or not a man has got a history, or a language, into his mind. You can discover, to entire certainty, whether he possesses *that* attainment or not,—possesses it for the time: though it may decay, that

attainment: it does not follow that because a man has it now, he will have it after ten years: and it is difficult to ascertain by any test you can bring, whether he have mastered it in that deliberate and thorough way which shall ensure its lasting. But no examination of that sort is possible in moral attainment, or in spiritual. You cannot set a man a paper in unselfishness: in magnanimity: in modesty: in truthfulness: in purity of heart: in sweetness and reasonableness of temper. You cannot examine a man in these, and give him so many marks, and place him according to his merit. It is quite certain, indeed, that most of our friends have, as concerns all these things, some working estimate of us: but it is not got from one examination, but from our general walk and life. Those around us, seeing much of us, will in time see how our light shines, or fails to shine: and, without any of that judging which Christ condemned, they cannot choose but think of us accord-

ingly. But when, at some turning-point in your pilgrimage; in the prospect of the recurring Communion; at the entering on a fresh season of work, of public or of private duty; it becomes fit that we should examine and estimate ourselves,—only ourselves, by God's grace indeed, and with such help as we can derive from the experience of some who are better and wiser,—only ourselves can do it. No other, under Him Who searches the heart, can examine us in single-mindedness, in devoutness, in love to God, in love to man, in nearness to Christ, in earnestness in prayer: No other, in brief, for it sums and includes all, can 'examine us, whether we be in the faith.'

There can be no doubt what my text means: nor any doubt, either, that each of us, to-day, ought to feel as though it were said to himself, just as really as to those to whom St Paul first said it. The text means, that we ought, to-day, to ask ourselves, with

just that real earnestness which cannot be put into words, whether we are Christians at all. 'Whether we be in the faith,' is, Whether we have any spiritual life,—Whether we are indeed believers. And the text implies that we may not be so. We may fancy we are right, when in truth we are wrong. One feels as though it were somewhat discouraging to think that most of us, at this time of day, should need to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. We have long made a Christian profession: we have many times, at the holy table, declared ourselves to be Christ's. Can it all have been a miserable deception: and after all these good purposes, and serious thoughts, and earnest prayers, and solemn sacraments, may we not be Christians at all? Why, it is like asking an old and ripe scholar, if he knows his English alphabet. Not that, not quite that. It is rather like asking a man who lives in a house whose foundations are washed by a stormy sea, whether he

have of late been looking to his foundations, and making sure they are trustworthy. That which is good in us, my Christian brethren, is apt to crumble away, unless continually seen to and kept in thorough repair. We have not got rid finally of a besetting sin, when we have put it down for once. We have not attained some good grace, because we felt ever so sure we had it for one hour or for many: Though we were, for the time, ever so humble, penitent, believing, kindly, resigned, it does not follow we shall be always so. And no one can so need to look to the enduring of God's grace in him, as he who believes in the perseverance of the saints: for *that* means that if we are now wrong, this proves we never were right at all. He who has the best 'good hope through grace,'—yea, the strongest assurance of salvation,—may well be asked, to-day, to examine himself, once more, if he be in the faith. That is never done too often: as the dweller in the lighthouse that

stands on the rock amid wild waves can never too often make sure that its foundations are untouched and unyielding.

Neither is the examination into our spiritual condition like that into our bodily health,—from which we have known some so shrink. For in the physical case, we may perhaps be told that there is something vitally wrong, that never can be set right: that we have come too late: that we must die: or that we must just bear it, the pain or the disability, and never hope to feel hale or well or hopeful any more. God be thanked, it is not thus with the soul, and what concerns the soul! It may be sad, indeed, and humbling, to find that we have been all wrong till now: or to find that we have lost ground wofully in grace, and are not as we were in happier days. But the feeble flame may be revived: and if we have been wrong till now, we may begin anew and be right henceforward. This is the place of hope! All evil

is yet remediable. So let us seriously and gravely look into this matter, and find how we really stand: God help us by His searching yet healing Spirit while we 'examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.'

It is not wise, or safe, we know, to found much on our own spiritual history: on what has been within ourselves, on feelings or convictions: specially if these have not lasted on, but rather faded out and died away. Yet we can look back, some of us, not without a hopefulness if likewise not without a misgiving, on times when we came under very deep impressions as to our souls: what we may humbly call a season of conversion. We felt our sinfulness: saw how we had wasted our life, a short life, and neglected what most concerned us; and with great earnestness cried to Christ for mercy and salvation. We repented of the past: really sought to believe on Him: felt some impulse, within, moving towards

what is good, which was not our own, which was thankfully recognized as the work of the Holy Spirit. There was great earnestness in prayer: a new meaning was discerned in the Bible: there was a clear conviction that this world is not our rest; and true delight in the worship of God. There was some measure of humility: of kindliness towards all: signally appearing in the wish that all were sharers in the same comfortable experience. And though we know that often, since, the heart has been very dead and cold, and that for long times together: and the soul was led into captivity to old sins: and there was a general falling away, in which the Bible was little cared for, and prayer was heartless and formal and restrained: yet we cannot but think, even yet, Surely then we entered by the Strait Gate: Surely that was a turning-point. Many persons, looking back, have said, If I had died then, I am sure I should have gone to Christ. It is hard to think that

all *that* was nothing, and will go for nothing: Such times of visitation leave a permanent trace upon the soul. Perhaps, in such a stage, undue importance is attached to warm feeling. The comfort, and the profit, of a communion-time, was estimated by *that*, unduly. Now, not setting too much store by an experience which many will recognize as their own, and the retrospect on which will bring many humbling thoughts, yet those who have passed through it, we may venture to say, will in all ordinary cases be thankful for it.

But it will not do to rest on a past, which may perhaps contrast sadly with our present state. After all, seeking to judge how we stand, it is not the former, but the actual condition of our souls, we must look to. For that is not the right fruit of the Spirit, which decays and goes: and there are those who had their days, most decided days, of deep religious impression and feeling, who as years went on, passed

quite away from these, and grew worldly and hardened. And though it be a blessed truth that Christ's salvation is sufficient for all, and offered to all, yet something is needed in us too: We must receive it. No doubt He is all-sufficient: and there is a sense in which He *has done* everything for us: yet we must work out our own salvation in a very real truth, by doing what is needed on our part that we may receive His. Now, have we done this? Are we doing it daily?

It is not a good sign of us if we wish to know what is the very least thing that may enable us to hope we are in Christ: that is, if we wish to know it with the intention of trying for *that* and no more. But it may be of comfort and help to some contrite and weary one, to begin at the lower end of the scale, and before thinking of higher attainments which have brought assurance to some, to think of lowly beginnings which may bring a good, if humble

hope. For there are some, by their make despond-ing and down-hearted, ready to write hard things against themselves, who can find little comfort or hope now, in these heavy days, but in falling back upon the very foundations, the very elements and principles of the better life, and holding tightly by these; as perhaps on our dying-bed we may all be thankful to do. Such may say, Well, I hope I see sin as a very evil thing: I hope I have real sorrow in my heart for it: Not merely for the pains that come of it,—though sometimes I am not the least sure even of that: I hope I have really committed my soul to Christ for salvation,—that I have really believed on Him in the way wherein he that believes is saved: I try to do *that* anew, every day: Coming, with nothing in my hand, I try daily to cling to His cross: I wish to do it again this moment, by a fresh act of faith: I look to Him anew, I believe on Him anew, —God help my unbelief. Surely we are on the right

foundation, doing even so. For, as the Larger Catechism says, in solemn words which have cheered many anxious, 'One who doubteth of his being in Christ—may have true interest in Christ though he be not yet assured thereof: and in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity.' God give to each of us that apprehension, and that desire, for our Redeemer's sake!

But it ought not to suffice any of us, who have long known Christ's name, to abide where the penitent thief perhaps abode, cleaving to Him at the very last. Have we a true desire to be like Christ,—pure, good, kind, and true? Having named His name, are we departing from all iniquity? I would not wish at all to make this seem like a sort of Mystery into which one must be initiated. But there is nothing of that in asking ourselves this: Have we felt the

constraining power of Christ's love and character and suffering in our heart? Are we in any degree devout? Are we prayerful: Not driven, not *always* driven, to prayer by fear, using prayer to keep off harm from us, but praying because it is pleasant, and natural? Then, are we getting over our special besetting sins? Dear friends, let us each remember, with whatever humiliation it may bring to many, that here is a very searching test of the presence of God's grace in us. If we are getting over these, it is a very hopeful thing. It is a good sign that we are in the faith. For it is not natural, to get over our besetting sins; at least, till physical nature fails. Naturally, as we get older, we get worse: we grow harder, more selfish, more worldly, less amiable, more suspicious, less kindly and generous, through years. Any special bad feature in us tends always to be aggravated. We *may* be in the faith, though we are not putting down our besetting sins: we must be, if we are.

It was said in my hearing, more than once, by one of the best Christian men I ever knew,—one who maintained the highest level of duty and devotion through an honoured ministry of nearly sixty years, and who, in the veneration of all men, passed to his rest,*—it was said by him that he did not see any warrant in the New Testament for Christian people cherishing, as concerns their soul's condition, any confidence higher than 'a good hope through grace.' But let us suppose you have reached that great attainment which seems to be at least possible, an entire assurance that you are numbered among the redeemed. If you have reached, or even approached to that, what a life yours should be! Christ tells us that all inner frames are to be tried by their outcome,—by their visible fruits. How does your Christian principle stand the test of actual life? Do such as see you take knowledge of you that you have

* The late Rev. Dr Muir of St Stephen's, Edinburgh.

been with Jesus? How does the life of grace within, bear you up in duty? Are you more faithful in that than other men: diligent when no eye is upon you but the Master's above: never content just to get your work through in some kind of way: doing it all truly as for Christ? How do you stand provocation? All earnest men, all finely-strung men, meet a great deal of that. You cannot get people to see things as you see them. You cannot get your own way, however sure you are it is right; however pure and unselfish your purposes and motives. Well, under all such irritating and stinging influences, how is it with you? Are you mild, are you patient even with the pig-headed and the dishonest, do you bear contradiction as Christ bore it? Or do you say, That is too much for poor humanity, with its inherited guilt and its tingling nervous system. These are counsels of perfection, and we must in practice be content with far humbler things. Ah, but we are

bidden to be perfect, bidden to be like Christ (and what more can there be?): and when you speak of assurance, you are (so to say it) going in for a severe examination; and you ought to be able to pass it triumphantly if you offer yourself for it at all: you are aiming at a high degree. Then business, with its temptations, which are many: how do you come out of that? Are you incapable of taking an unfair, though permissible, advantage: does the buyer never need to be on his guard when you are the seller: In all bargains, do you look as sharply to another's interest as to your own? There cannot be a doubt what Christ would have done: and *there* is our rule. As to affliction, testing affliction, from the blankness of a little disappointment up to the unspeakable heart-break of a great bereavement: how do you bear *that?* Have you attained, I say not to the Redeemer's manner of enduring sorrow, but to the sincere utterance of the blind Galileo, 'It has pleased God

that it should be so, and it must please me too?' Then, how does your Christian principle manifest itself in the behalf of zeal for Christ's cause: zeal for Christ's cause as distinguished from standing up for our own Church or sect or parish, and from the magnifying and glorifying of ourselves? Are we content, are we thankful, if the good work is done, if not by ourselves then by others: that Christ increase and we decrease? Can we find it in our heart sincerely to say, Well, we have worked our best and hardest for Him, spending and being spent: our work has come to nothing; we are mortified, beaten, set aside: but the great cause thrives without us: wherefore, glory to God's Name! Show me the zealous and eager-hearted man who has attained to this, that I may reverence a new Baptist, come in the spirit of Elijah! Great is the grace, undoubted the divine fire within, which has made this of poor self-seeking human nature! By such fruit

we know such a one as assuredly of Christ's own.

And it may be said, with confidence, that the Christian principle is sound and sincere, which will show outwardly the kindly fruits of the Spirit, though climate and soil and all outward surroundings be unfavourable. Genuine is the zeal for Christ, which will bear up to work steadfastly for Christ under long discouragement. We are not so sure of that, which finds its reward in what is quite appreciable by the natural man, the shining success of its plans and pains. Genuine is the spark of a higher life, which makes a man or woman pass through mortifications and disappointments unsoured, though subdued: which accepts heavy trial with a submissive and teachable heart: which holds *him* scrupulously honest in word and deed who could make gain of untruthfulness: which prompts to self-denial, sustained self-denial, in act and in feeling,—for self presses on us steadily as gravitation: which fills the soul, at the

first alienated from God, with a real love and enjoyment of communion with Him in prayer. In brief: Does our religion do what Christ meant it to do? Then it is the right thing. Does it fail? Then it is the wrong,—or at best, we have great reason to fear it may be so. Or, does our religion only do its work, when it is bolstered up by factitious help? Can we only pray and worship heartily, with all the surroundings in our favour: when the sublime church and the magnificent ritual lift up, and thrill nerve and heart, and sweep away? Are we only kind to others when they are very interesting and very grateful: Can we only be thankful when there is a great deal to be thankful for: Can we only be honest when we are not tempted to be other: only be trustful of God's providing when there is no load of care, no hedging temptation of weary worry? We are not so clear as to the result of our examination of the life within us which suffices with everything in its

favour: the devotion which must be helped by all hearty accessories,—and the crowded, cordial congregation in the plain Scotch church is just as little a spiritual accessory as is the great cathedral: the zeal and fervent toil of the minister when the hearty warmth and interest and affection of a loving and working flock lift him above himself: the philanthropy which goes about doing good amid all that can encourage,—amid beaming looks and tear-bringing blessings,—but is chilled and checked when those who take its favours are uninteresting, coarse-grained, unthankful. I do not say but we should be thankful should our way be made smooth for us: better to be kept afloat anyhow than not kept afloat at all. I do not say but we should be thankful if our better life is made easy and natural: only in that case we have less confident hope that it is there at all. It may be no more than an excitement of a most earthly origin; and not the fire of God's own

kindling. The true life of grace ought to be like a hardy tree, and not like a petted exotic.

Well,—but perhaps these last thoughts are away from us. We do not even fancy that we have already attained any other than a lowly, if a good degree. We have been seeking to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith. If we be, all praise to God. If we be not, God help us to begin now. If we are in doubt, let us ask Him to search and try us. And be it howsoever, we turn anew, each one of us, to Christ this day, praying Him to receive us. The kind Face that drew the little ones to Him, is not here: we cannot see it till we die. But He promised, most Faithful and most Merciful, to be present in the gathering of two or three met in His Name: and we may be sure He hears us now, as we ask Him to take us in all unworthiness, to pardon, sanctify, comfort, and save.

DISCOURSE II.

II.

*ON CHRISTMAS-DAY.**

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'—S. LUKE, II. 14.

IN all the Christian year, in all the secular year, there is not a day which has gained the heartiness of universal welcome, like the kindly Christmas. It was our Blessed Redeemer's Death that consummated His great atonement; and of that Death we know the very day: it was on the seventh of April Christ died. Yet Good Friday has but a slight recognition, when compared with Christmas. It is on our Blessed Redeemer's Resurrection that all our hopes depend: If He were not risen, Christian

* Town Church, St Andrews: 1872.

people are of all most deluded. Yet though Easter-day be chief in the Church's Kalendar, and though it come in the hopeful Spring with the first green leaves, when the most care-worn know some fitful waking-up of the old light-heartedness, it never has taken such hold of the common mind of our race as has the Sacred Festival that comes in the deadest days of the drear December, when in the wild winter-time the heaven-born Child lay meanly-wrapt in the rude manger: when those linked by blood, and early remembrances of the same fireside, but parted the long year through by the estranging necessities of life, strive to meet again, as in childhood, together: and all the innocent mirth, the revived associations, the kindly affection, are hallowed by the environing presence of the Birth-day of the Blessed Redeemer.

It is pleasant to think that this great Festival of our holy religion, recalling the solemn fact of the Nativity and Incarnation, is so linked and twined

with human and domestic affection: pleasant to think, that by common consent of all men, everything kindly, charitable, cheerful, and hopeful, goes so congenially with the thought of Christ. I do not care that the twenty-fifth of December is not really the great Birthday, nor that no one knows when that day does actually fall. Enough that this day has been kept as such for sixteen hundred years. Enough that when Christmas-time comes back, with all the sacred remembrances it brings with it of redeeming love and of free salvation,—of God's mysterious and incommunicable attributes taken into union with humanity, and brought near to each of us by Him who is Emmanuel, God with us,—enough that the meetings together of divided families under the old roof-tree where the aged parents yet linger, or elsewhere after parents are gone;—the long-looked-for holiday season of the boys and girls;—the breathing-space of rest in the life of the hardest workers;—the

gladness pensive with the remembrances of the dead and the thought how time is telling on us all; and in other days the free-handed charity, the rich man's door open to all comers, the levelling of all ranks if only for the day that brought salvation alike to rich and poor,—even the child-like merriment of sports with which we now could with difficulty sympathize, though they were well in a simpler time,—enough that all these be the congenial recognition of what men held to be the Birthday of Christ!

We would not coldly reason about such a day. For everything that is simple and kindly and child-like seems meet in the sacred season wherein the great Founder of our faith and Pattern of our life was Himself a little Child. One recalls with sympathy even the superstitious beliefs which we have ourselves outgrown, which were common in men's hearts and minds in days departed, and which testify to the mystic reverence, love, hopefulness, and beauty,

that clung to the blessed day. It was a superstition, but a beautiful superstition,—beautiful like the illusions of childhood which must perforce be left behind,—that as the first hour of the Great Birthday struck, the cattle knelt in their stalls as those did that were present at the Nativity: that all powers of darkness were powerless that night, and could do nothing to molest any Christian soul: that kind spirits, always kind, had then more strength allowed them to do kind deeds,—so that little children might lie down to sleep in full faith that on waking in the morning they would find beside them some pleasant gift, brought by God's good angels. It was a child-like, but a pious thought, that the green holly-leaves with the red berries wherewith all dwellings were decorated, recalled the Crown of Thorns, with its drops of precious blood; that the thorn-tree which Joseph of Arimathea brought to the Vale of Avalon blossomed yearly in the ungenial winter-month which yet had

within it the happiest day of all the year; and that the little red-breast, picking its scanty crumbs amid the snow, had its reminder too of our Saviour,—in that red stain which came of the drops which fell on it as it sought to pluck out one of the nails of the Cross; and which in every Christian land have made the poor bird safe and sacred.

No doubt the yule log and the mistletoe may be traced back to Heathenism: even as the Gregorian Tones may be. The heathen temples of Greece, it seems likely, first heard that simple, yet matchless music: and bloody Druidism brought in the yule-log, and hung up the little twigs. But it is not unfit that the religion of Him who made the water wine, and consecrated the earthly to heavenly uses, should take things known and familiar by old custom, and make them Nature's pleasant memorials of better and worthier things. The gathering of a scattered household is good, apart from any religious sanction.

Thus we strive against the estranging power of time, the sorrowful alienation of years. But it is pleasant that it be hallowed; it is well that surrounding all kind affections and old associations there be the atmosphere of the great Redeemer's birth. We have grown quieter in our ways than were our Christian forefathers: we are sophisticated, and cannot easily be interested or impressed by the like simple means as they. We do not now choose out our Lord of Misrule: the Mummers, still partially known in this ancient city, are much abated of the old formality, and state, and seriousness; and in a hundred ways the Christmas of past ages (we are made to feel) is gone. The Baron's hall, if there be anywhere what could without affectation be called so, may be decked as of yore: but it is filled no longer with that crowd, mingling all social distinctions, which feudal years knew. Nor does the congregation gather now for God's worship, in the dead of

the winter-night, as the midnight bells cease their chime, to welcome the Birthday of Him who is every true man's Brother. Even the very seasons seem changed; the bracing frost, the quiet snow, the exhilarating air we remember at the Christmasses of our childhood,—how different from these gloomy skies and drenching rains and deep muddy ways! But we will not admit, if we can help it, anything of the cynical spirit that has outgrown Christmas: we thank God that a new generation of children are here, with childhood's wondering and believing nature; and the good man will strive to welcome the Season to the last, as when he was a boy. Sobered, indeed, and subdued, we who are older have now our gentle remembrances of those gone from us, but still one with us in the Communion of Saints. There is, to most, some gathering of the old familiar faces, in a circle hardly lessened, forasmuch as little new faces are coming, too—filling the places of the dead, and

sometimes recalling their features. And the blessed time, even to such as scarcely associate it with a Saviour's birth, retains a consecration more real than ever was given or dispelled by historic fact or fancy. For Christmas, do what you might to abate its sanctity, would still abide the season of cordial greetings and heartfelt good wishes: of sapped enmities and offences forgotten: of hearts warmed by the genial spirit of the time: of cheerful and sad recollections of early days: of holiday to all classes: of larger benevolence to the rich; and increase of comforts to the poor.

And if it be that the ideal Christmas, all pure goodwill and quiet content and child-like gaiety,—the ideal Christmas of frosty skies, and beautiful snow bending the hearty evergreens and the great pines,—the ideal Christmas of oaken halls, and Gothic arches, and quaint carols, and old-fashioned ways,—has come to few among us, or come to none: If

there have been ever, at Christmas-tide, since we were children, some worry, anxiety, trouble,—some drawback that made us feel that not this year can the blessed season be all we could wish it;—Think, is not this just the way of this disappointing world, and the condition of our being here? Not in this troublesome life can we hope the full satisfaction of these immortal natures. Not in this world, in the full measure, can there be Glory to God in the highest, nor peace and goodwill among men. Little offences and irritations will take from Christmas kindness: little worries and heavy sorrows will take from Christmas peace. We cannot pretend, even to-day, to think well of every human being we know. And not here, any more, can the Christmas gathering of the family be complete. The faces that used to be brightest, and the voices that were cheeriest, are gone. Christ bring us in the end to that Home, where we shall see His kind face and be happy:

bring us, parents and children, brothers and sisters, where all that was dear, all that was good and pleasant about this life, shall be restored to us, and all sin and sorrow shall be forgot!

DISCOURSE III.

III.

*DEBATABLE QUESTIONS.**

'Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.'—PROV. XIV. 4.

I HAVE no liking at all for an affected oddity in the choice of texts on which to found sermons; and you may be quite sure that I have not selected this text merely because it is out of the common way. It is quite true that the attention of an inattentive and listless congregation may be aroused, at least for a few minutes, by the announcement of a singular text; and then the preacher has his chance of fixing the ears of such people to what may be sound and important instruction. But in preaching to a congregation so intelligent and attentive as this

* Town Church, St Andrews: Jan. 12, 1873.

one is not driven to any expedients partaking of the nature of clap-trap: and I now bring this text before your minds because a few days since I came upon it in the course of reading in Proverbs: and, as it often happens in the experience of every preacher, the principle implied in the words came out with special clearness, as an interesting and suitable subject of discourse. Let us pray that the Blessed Spirit may help us to draw spiritual good from what in its first intention may seem nothing more than an axiom of shrewd worldly wisdom.

Of course, you see, readily enough, the obvious meaning of the sentence. If a man has got no oxen at all, he is saved any trouble which comes of one's having oxen: but he likewise loses the good which one gets by having oxen: and that good, Solomon implies, is greater than the trouble. Where there are no oxen in the stall, the stall is readily kept in a very tidy and orderly condition: you put it right for once,

and then there is nothing to put it wrong; and so it stays right. But still, on the other side of the scale, the wise man tells us, 'much increase is by the strength of the ox': the fallow field is broken up by the plough the poor ox draws: the golden harvest waves in autumn, because of the spring labours of the industrious beast: then the laden waggon bears the corn to the farm-yard, drawn by the ox again: and thus useful while it lives, when at last the poor creature dies, there is not a bit of it which may not be made of service to man. You must take the animal for better for worse: and doubtless in the judgment of reasonable beings, the worse is very far overbalanced by the better.

That is the literal meaning of this proverb of Solomon. But of course you know that a proverb is not said or written for the sake of its literal meaning. The worth of a proverb lies in this, that stating one case, it suggests a hundred. It sets forth a

general principle. Many are the instances in which it is as here: that there is something to be said on each side of a debatable question; and it is for the wise man to weigh the matter, and judge on which side there is most to say. Thus, in a house where there are no children, the income goes much further: the father and mother can afford to have things which if they had children they could not: the dwelling is quieter, the furniture lasts longer, there is a general orderliness. Yet, with all that, those whom God has blest with children, amid all the anxieties which attend their upbringing, would not think that any worldly advantages could make up for their loss. Then, a man to whom God has given wealth, is spared many sorry calculations, much hard toil when he has little heart for it: but on the other hand he runs the risk of living a listless, useless life, or even one of gross vice and sin. So, in a National Established Church, a clergyman, being entirely independ-

ent (so far as money is concerned) of his congregation and parishioners, may possibly (if he be a man of no principle) turn lazy, and grossly neglect his duty: the thing is conceivable, though I have hardly ever seen it. But against this possible disadvantage of the system, are to be set infinitely greater advantages: the entire deliverance of the religious instructors of the people from the temptation to preach not what is true but what is pleasant: a temptation which as you know was strong enough to enable a race of slave-holders to provide for themselves a race of preachers sneaky enough and blinded enough to preach habitually that slavery is right: the lowest point of degradation, as I think, ever reached by man.

These are examples of what Solomon says in that proverb. No doubt, the thing is very plain. It seems so plain, that you would say no sensible person would ever need to be reminded of it.

But it is just one of those things of which we all need to be reminded, every day. For who is there that does not know, that a great many people, when a plausible objection is brought forward to some belief they hold, are ready at once to give up that belief as untenable; and that a great many people too, when some plausible reason is brought forward why they should do or think something, are ready to think so or to act so, without looking to the other side of the balance of reasons? In fact, immediately on seeing that where no oxen are the crib is clean, they determine that they shall have nothing to do with oxen,—forgetting altogether the weightier consideration on the other hand, that much increase is by the strength of the ox. In brief, brethren, the practical lesson for you and me from this text is, that because we see an objection to a thing,—even a weighty and undeniable objection,—we are not, therefore, to reject that thing, till we see what there is to

be said in its behalf: and further, that although we see a reason for a thing, a strong reason, several reasons, we are not to go straight and conclude in favour of that thing, till we look, and find, and weigh, what there is to be said against it.

A great many people have been so brought up, both as regards their religious belief and their ecclesiastical views, that their actual convictions are subjected to a peculiar risk. These people (and there are many of them) have grown up under the impression that on the questions on which they have been trained to hold decided opinions, all the reasons are on one side, their own side: and when they come to find that it is not so, but that very plausible objections may be stated to their most cherished beliefs, their confidence in these beliefs is rudely shaken; and they are (in some cases) ready to throw them aside and go over to new ways of thinking. If they had been taught (which is the fact), that wherever rational

beings, not personally interested in the issue, have been ranged on different sides of a question, there must have been reasons to be pleaded on either side: that on hardly any debatable question are all the reasons on one side: then they would not have been shaken by the first skilfully-put objection to their hereditary beliefs: They would have thought, This is just what we expected, or might have expected: and even if they were not able to answer the objection at once, or at all, they would not cast aside the old belief till they had weighed the reasons on either side, and found out on which side was the greater weight. It is the *preponderance* of reasons and likelihoods which has determined the intelligent creed of the race, on all questions lesser and greater; and will to the end. It is not that nothing whatsoever could be said on the wrong side. Go into any court of justice, so called; and you will find how much an ingenious counsel will find to say in support of the

falsest and most preposterous conclusion. Take an example. We have all been taught since we were children that certain of the essential doctrines of the Roman Church (which I hope none of you will ever call the Catholic Church) are wrong. We believe, and are sure, that they are wrong. But though there is an overwhelming balance of reason against them, which makes one (in some cases) practically as sure that they are wrong as that two and two make four; still, there is something to be said, such as it is, for even the worst of them. Take for instance the keeping back the Bible from the people: refusing to allow a man to read the Bible without the Church's explanations of it, and the priest's permission. To us, nothing appears more flagrantly wrong than to deprive any man of God's written word. Still, the Romanist has something to say for himself. He puts it that there is so much difficulty in understanding much of the Bible; that such per-

nicious errors have followed from false interpretations of it. All true: some of the cruellest and wickedest things men ever did in this world, they have sought to justify by the authority of God's word. But still, on the balance of reasons: considering that for one hard text in the book, there are a hundred perfectly plain; and that for one man the Bible has led wrong, there are ten thousand it has led right; we come back, after looking at the Roman objection, to the old conviction of our childhood, that God's word is to be put in the hand of all; those 'holy scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

Think, even, of the dogma of the Infallibility of the Church. The keen Protestant puts that dogma as an instance of unheard-of arrogance. The devout Romanist puts it as an instance of deep humility and earnest faith. He says he ventures not to think that the Church, in her own wisdom, is able to keep in-

fallibly right: but he has perfect confidence that God will not suffer the Church to deliberately fall into error. Two very different ways of putting the same thing. I do not admit, that in the face of facts,—in the presence of examples manifold of the Church's erring,—the Roman suggestion shakes me for one instant from my conviction that (as is said in the Confession of Faith) 'the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error.' Still, the other view, though wrong, is arguable. And if a case be arguable at all, there is no doubt that in skilful hands the worse may be made to seem the better reason.

Further: there are matters pertaining to our religious belief, questions as to which there are reasons on each side; but as to which we come to our conclusion not merely by feeling the force of the reasons which support the conclusion we come to; but also by persuading ourselves that we have seen through

all objections to it,—that we are able to answer, and set aside, all the reasons and arguments which look the opposite way. This, certainly, is a very assuring and comfortable thing. We can be in no perplexity whatever as to how the balance inclines, if all the weights be in fact in one scale and none at all in the other. But there are cases in which we hold a belief, and hold it firmly, though all the while we see reasons against it which are not merely plausible and weighty at first sight, but which we cannot, after the fullest thought, answer at all. We hold our belief: and we are sure it is sound: though we are well aware that there are objections to it which are by us unanswerable. There is one notable case, in which we are quite sure of each of two truths, which yet seem to us to contradict each the other. Each is true: yet each is liable to an unanswerable objection.

I am thinking of that great and sure doctrine,

that God not only foreknows but fore-ordains all we do. And yet we know that we are free: that we are not fettered by that fore-ordination in our choice of the course we shall take: that we are responsible for all we do,—which we should not be if we were simply constrained like a machine to run along the rails laid down for us. That doctrine of Predestination, as it is called: it is not to say it stands in the authoritative Creed of the Christian Church: not to say that it must stand there forasmuch as it is plainly taught in the New Testament: in the nature of things you cannot get away from it if you believe in a God at all. And yet, we know that we are free: we know that whensoever we do wrong, it is our own fault and not God's: we know in our conscience that we deserve punishment when we do wrong, which we should not deserve if we were mere machinery: and furthermore, after all talk of the doctrine of Election to a share in Christ's Atone-

ment, after all is said concerning God's Elect, we know well that if we have not till now accepted the Gospel salvation, the ruinous doing is entirely our own: we might, if we would. Now these things cannot be reconciled. One seems to say, you shall stick to the track marked out for you and never leave it by a hair's-breadth: The other seems to say, You are free,—free as air, free as the air is not,—to choose your track for yourself. One says, you can never believe in Christ and be saved unless you were appointed to that ages before you were born. The other says, as firmly, and far more practically, Believe in Christ and be saved: Free to you and free to every sinner that will take it is His great salvation. We are sure of each truth: and to us they seem contradictory. They cannot be so, indeed, or they would not both be true: for the contradiction of truth must be falsehood: but only God knows how they are to be reconciled. It must come to this at the

last; and we had far best admit it from the first: in the candid spirit of him who wrote the text, and admitted that something might be said against what he yet was sure of.

Now I know, as many clergymen know, that there are good men and women, earnestly thoughtful about their soul's salvation, to whom this doctrine of Election is a hindrance and a difficulty. I am constrained to say that it seems to me the doctrine will be so, only in morbid moods. It is not a difficulty which will practically lie heavily on a healthful mind, or permanently do so: it is a difficulty which for a time; and in seasons of depression, and the tendency to take warped views which comes of *that;* has probably been felt by all. Just let the old puzzle be stated, that any now perplexed by it may be comforted by recognizing in it that which has been in the experience of many others: and which they did not see through, but grew out of it, and learned to

be quite content in the presence of it without seeing through. It is this: If I am appointed to be saved, I shall be saved without doing anything or taking any trouble: and if I am not appointed to be saved, then I shall not be saved however much thought and pains I may take: Wherefore, I shall do nothing. Now, there is no refutation of any argument like a practical refutation: and no stronger proof that there is a flaw in reasoning than that the reasoning lands you in a practical absurdity. Yet, without pretending to answer that difficulty which I have just stated, let me say this: That all practical perplexity about Election and Predestination comes of *this:* that people vaguely think that their eternal state is *more* predestined than the events in their earthly life. If you keep it clearly before you, that your eternal state is predestined exactly in the same sense in which everything you say and do every day of your life is predestined, the practical perplexity will vanish: you

may find it as difficult as ever to make up your mind as to what you ought to think about it all, but you will have no difficulty earthly in making up your mind as to what you ought to do. For just as the fact that God fore-ordained whether you should come to church to-day or not would not lead any sane person among you to sit down in the morning and say, If I am appointed to go to church I shall be taken without my doing anything, and if I am appointed not to go to church I shall not get there however hard I try: even so, the fact that God has appointed whether we are each to be saved, is a fact with which we practically have nothing to do: The thing for us, in spiritual matters exactly as in worldly, is to go and take all the proper steps towards the end we want, and to use all the suitable means. Whether or not you are to reach heaven, is appointed exactly as it is appointed whether or not you are any day to get your daily food. Of course, if you do not use

the means to get your daily food, you will not get it. If you do use the means to get it, then by God's blessing you will get it. And it is so with our soul's salvation: exactly and identically so. If you are in earnest for that, go and pray for it and labour for it: Go and take it in God's way: there is no obstacle with Him: Go and cast your soul upon Christ: Do not wait and try to clear up the riddle of the universe first: Do not think to see through secret things which we may leave with God, before you begin. If you do that, you will never begin: and your doom will be on your own head. See, this day there are set before you blessing and cursing, life and death: Therefore choose life and good, and turn away from death and evil.

If more needed to be said to take away the *practical* perplexity of Predestination (and it is *that* only I meddle with), it might be this: Think *Who* it is

that predestines all things! It is God, only Wise, only Good, All-merciful, Who wills not that one should perish, but all believe and live! Are you content to leave it all in His hands? Whatever He does must be right. Think: If you were asked now, would you wish to appoint what things shall happen to you through this year,—or would you rather leave it all to the appointment of your Saviour,—which would be the safer and wiser thing to do? Would you, if you might, take the awful responsibility of deciding the year's events for you and yours: or not infinitely rather leave the decision with Christ? Well, as you would trust Him with all yet to do, even so with all already done! Thy will be done! It must be a right, a wise, a loving will. You provide carefully for your little children: and you expect them to trust you. And He, the Best Father above, the Father Which is in heaven, Who loves His poor sinful children as never did earthly mother,—He has

ordered all things: and He looks that we should trust where we cannot understand. Which by His grace we will, now and evermore!

And now, coming towards the end of my discourse, I will tell you what it was that was in my mind when I thought of my text to-day, with its plain common-sense suggestion that a prudent man before determining to accept an opinion or not to accept it will weigh what is to be said on both sides: consider, to take a familiar phrase, both *pros* and *cons:* and not be taken in by a plausible or even a weighty statement of reasons till he sees what is to be urged on the contrary. Last week I glanced over a printed document which some of you may also have seen, which sets out a grave indictment against the Church of our fathers: a long list of charges against her: leading those who sent forth that document to the conclusion that she ought to be overthrown. Of the

motives of the persons who published that attack upon the Church of Scotland I know nothing: as I know nothing of themselves. I wish to believe they are honest in what they do: though it is hard to think so in the face of the crafty but clumsy paper they have issued; in which I am bold to say the real reasons of their hatred of the National Church are carefully concealed. There is not one of the arguments for national Atheism which could not be answered at half a minute's notice: not one which (religiously) has a feather's weight. And I remarked, not with anger but with contempt, that the little document concludes by setting forth that we, who hold as vital the principle of a national profession of Christianity, are sure to have recourse to various mean tricks with the view of keeping things as they are. For very naturally, the persons who wrote that paper suppose we are somewhat like themselves. Now, I am not going to refute the reasons, such as they are, which

are stated in that document: but only to counsel all of you, if in these coming months you have pressed upon you, as it seems to be designed you should, statements to the prejudice of the Church, and what seem plausible arguments against her continued existence and power,—never to attach any consequence to these till you have gone and asked some competent adviser what there is to be said upon the other side: whether those statements are true,—whether those arguments are sound,—whether, if there be weight in them, they are not counter-balanced by reasons of tenfold weight. With the distinct statement before me that the Church is forthwith to be systematically assailed, I deem it my duty to say so much by way of caution: more than this I will not say in this place. It is not *here* that such questions are to be argued out: and you know it is not my way to touch them. My duty here is to preach the Gospel of Christ: and to try to forget the enmities and jealousies which are

the scandal and weakness of the Christian Church; and which in the eyes of shrewd worldly men cast an air of falsity and of ridicule on all fair pretences and public talk of unity and concord. Nor do I believe that in your hearing the Church of our fathers needs to be either defended or apologized for. I venture not to say that she is perfect, any more than any institution on earth is perfect; nor to say that either in government or worship she is incapable of being improved. But I say she was good enough for better men: our fathers lived and died in her: and I say there is no Christian virtue which may not be practised and perfected within her pale. *That* is the great thing after all. And surely it is well for the nation that in each parish over the land there be an educated man set who has no other end than the good of sinful souls; and who is ready at the call of every poor sick creature that would be counselled or prayed with. I should like to know what

good it would do to any mortal that this state of things should cease: unless indeed to the envious and sordid soul that grudges the Church her little patrimony, — the little saved at the Reformation from hypocritical robbers,—which is the patrimony of the poor, and which costs no living man a farthing.

But remember, Christian friends, that you are the Church: and that with you (under God) it abides whether she shall stand or fall. A living Church will not fall: and it is with you to say whether ours shall be a living Church. A Christian Church is an assemblage of Christian people: it is by striving to deepen our own spiritual life, and strengthen it, that the Church will be strengthened and vivified. All her old renown; all her doings in ages past; all her worldly advantages; will not maintain the Burning Bush if her people turn cold-hearted and undevout; known among their fellow-Christians in the land

for less zeal, less work, less liberality. *That* reproach has sometimes been cast at us: God grant it never come true! Rather let us seek higher degrees in grace: simpler faith in the Redeemer, and souls more filled with the Blessed Spirit of God.

DISCOURSE IV.

IV.

*THE FOLLY OF SIN.**

'The foolishness of man perverteth his way.'—PROV. XIX. 3.

AND so here is sin traced to its right source. It is the foolishness of man that perverteth his way. And I believe that to certain classes of sinners, this theory of the true origin of the transgressions that stain their daily life, is just the most disagreeable that could well be presented. A bad man would rather be thought a rogue, than a fool. He would rather you should hate him, than despise him. He would rather be the object of universal indignation, than of universal contempt. There are weak minds that see something grand and romantic about

* Glasgow Cathedral: June 29, 1873.

a high-handed reprobate, who boldly outrages public opinion and ignores the law of God, and dares to be recklessly bad. There is something like courage and manliness there, some people are ready to think if they would not venture to say: but about the fool there is no redeeming feature. There is nothing fine and dashing in that quarter. The emptiest idiot that ever idolized muscular blackguardism, thinks of such a one with mere contempt. How strange, then,—and not less mortifying than strange, must it appear to many, to find it stated in the text, and assumed as certain in a hundred passages of Holy Scripture, that the two classes are mainly identical: that every man whose sin merits our reprobation, is by his folly entitled to our contempt: that every wicked man is a weak man; and that every rogue is a fool!

A very moderate acquaintance with the literature of the day will suffice to show us how thoroughly

that divine teaching is forgotten by many, which sets forth the folly, and the contemptibleness, of sin. It need not be said that it is not asserted that sin and folly are different names for the same thing: we assert (of course) that all sin is folly, not that all folly is sin. What we mean is that every wicked man is of necessity a weak man: not that every weak man is a wicked man. What we maintain is that it is a delusion,—and a most groundless and irrational one,—to think that sin ever can be other than a vile, mean, contemptible thing:—a thing as much below the reason, as it is contradictory to the conscience, of man. It was a falsehood to say that vice loses half its guilt when it loses all its grossness: and no less is it mischievous in tendency, and false in fact, to represent that any association with what would otherwise be noble and reasonable can take sin out of the class of extremest folly. God's Word recognizes no such distinction

as worldly men draw between those transgressions which are despicable as well as wrong, and those other which they hold to be wrong on such a grand scale as to have ceased to be despicable. God's Word propounds its unflattering theory of the origin of all sin; and tells us that (co-operating doubtless with the depravity of man) it is the foolishness of man that perverteth his way. When a man commits sin (that is), the fact is proof that he is foolish as well as wicked. And there are sinners to whom the first part of the inference is far more distasteful than the second. They would rather be set down as wicked than as weak. But it will not do. Their sins prove not merely the badness of their heart, but also the weakness of their understanding. All sin is folly. Every sinner is a fool. It is not 'The high spirit of man perverteth his way:' Not 'The warm heart of man perverteth his way:' These are complimentary ways of explaining the fact, and incom-

plete ways. The text goes deeper: and it tells us the sorry truth, that 'The foolishness of man perverteth his way.'

No doubt it is because of that fatal warp, and twist, of our entire nature, which is expressed in the familiar statement that man is fallen, that the understanding is weak as well as the heart evil-inclined. But, not forgetting this, I believe it may prove a most useful subject for our present meditation, to look round for considerations that come in proof of the statement in my text, and that tend to convince us that sin is folly. For this is one of those truths which we all fail to take home. Not merely are professed Christians slow to believe that fools, and such only, will make a mock at sin, and reject the Saviour from it; but many unrenewed men seem actually to fancy that the fact is reversed, and that it is rather a mark of weakness of mind, and pliancy of character, to evince anything like earnest anxiety about

eternity, and the soul's well-being throughout that awful duration. It is long since an inspired Apostle, as he spoke with the warmth his subject deserved concerning a Redeemer and a Judgment-day, was called mad by one who was incapable of understanding his thoughts, or entering into his feelings. And sad as it may be to think so, we cannot choose but believe that there are too many who entertain a notion which they would hardly put in words, but which really comes to this, that Religion is a thing not adapted to the manly and masculine-minded; but fitted exclusively to weak souls, to morbidly-conscientious people, to women, and to the aged and infirm. It is a thing, they think, that really lies outside the range of mature men, who are battling with the realities of life: and they leave it, accordingly, to the idle, and the weak, and (in short) to those who feel they need it. And to find evidence that such notions are entertained, we need go no farther than

to many of our churches in our great cities. You will find there, in the comparison, not many of those who are involved in the greater affairs of this world. Fifty years ago, in the metropolis of this country, you would hardly have found a man of high professional standing in the house of God. And perhaps the great Deceiver may have so misled his victims, as to make them fancy that their empty place in church is rather a proof of their superiority to the pusillanimous and narrow-minded and half-educated who are regular in their attendance there. I will grant such, if it pleases them, that the majority of too many Christian congregations does consist of women, and the young, and the aged: but it would be strange logic that should infer from this that therefore these congregations consist of the weak-minded of the community. No: Before you infer that, you must take it for granted that Christianity is a silly and a senseless thing. Prove *that:* and then

tell us it argues strength of mind to despise and coolly set aside its claims! Prove *that:* and then tell us that the congregation that gathers day by day to the house of prayer is made up of the foolish and weak-minded! But if Christianity be, as we know it is or we know nothing, a message from God to man:—if it set out the one way of being good and useful and hopeful on earth, and tells us of the single path that leads to peace when we have passed through all these troubles:—if our Maker and Judge commands that we give it our earnest heed, and our weal or woe for the long eternity depends on our solemn consideration and hearty acceptance of it: tell me whether the weakness and the folly lie with those who receive, or with those who reject it! Let us stand out before the wide universe: and let God and angels and all intelligent beings say which is the fool!

Not only, too, are some of our race so blinded,

as actually to fancy *that* as proof of strength of mind which (rightly regarded) is evidence of the most unworthy weakness: but you know, besides, it has ever been a favourite excuse with fallen men, while with a certain frankness owning how great have been their errors, to lay these rather to the impulse of the heart than to the miscalculation of the head. You will think at once of one great genius, who all but justified himself before his Maker for the wanderings of a life that was often wildly wrong, by setting them all to the witching voice of passion, that coloured his conduct, and carried captive his will. But he did not remember that there was something more than passion needed, to lead him wrong: he forgot that God gave reason to curb its wild dictates and restrain its reckless impulses: he forgot that the weak head was at fault no less than the fiery heart; and that the miscalculation must go hand-in-hand with the mere pressure to act. Doubtless, it sounded finer to

put the case as did Burns: Rather the bounding pulse than the erring judgment: For nowhere in God's Word or elsewhere is sin set in a light that goes more against the grain, than when we strip it of the fair colours of the erring poet's art, and show it in the pitiable guise of folly.

Now let us look more particularly at the lines of evidence which prove that the truth is so.

That the sinner is a fool appears broadly in this: That he systematically prefers things of less value to those which are of incalculably greater. Every act of sin amounts to a declaration on the part of him who does it, that he prefers the immediate gratification which it will yield, to the favour of God which by committing it he must lose. He knows perfectly that whatever enjoyment he may get by any sinful deed, he will not get for nothing. He knows perfectly that if not in this life, then in the next, he

will pay in bitter anguish and bitter remorse the tenfold price of whatever he grasps at now. And if this be so, what is every act of sin but an act of outrageous folly: and by what name but that of fool shall we call the man whose whole life is a succession of such acts? Worldly prudence may suffice to convince that it is not the part of a reasonable being to purchase even the perfect happiness of the present, by burdening the future with an incomparably greater amount of trouble and toil: And what can we say,—what can we think of him, who knowingly and deliberately buys hours or years of this world's pleasure or this world's good, with the misery of his endless eternity, and the loss of his immortal soul!

We do not say that the sinner gets nothing,—no enjoyment or advantage,—in exchange for that which he gives away. All we say is that what he gains bears no proportion whatsoever to what he loses. A straw is nearer the value of an earthly kingdom, than any

conceivable gain, in worldly pleasure or profit, is to the value of the soul. Even if there were no dark forebodings as to what the awful Future might be bringing,—forebodings that would turn every cup to gall and every prospect to blank misery,—even if there were none of these,—and I doubt not there may be people by whom they are comparatively unfelt: even if sin and sinful pleasure could make life one long dream of delight: it would still be a dream that would issue in a tremendous waking. With the mighty force of argument that proves the worldling's folly, it needs not that we abate one jot of the earthly price for which he is content to lose his soul. We will not speak of the graceless pleasure-seeker's distempered rest and accusing conscience: we will not deny that worldly wealth may be attained by means directly unjust, or at the least questionably honest: we will admit that worldly wealth brings worldly comforts and advantages be-

yond number, and (however got) will secure the obsequious respect of some. But we will say that for all this, the graceless pleasure-seeker and the dishonest man have made a madman's bargain: They have written themselves down as in God's judgment fools. And though the world may point to the worldling as one who is reaping, perhaps in the calm decline of life, the reward of active industrious days that are gone, we must say to that, No: Not reaping yet. Not on this side of time. He has sown, and will reap, and reap as he has sown: We all must, God help us: but the crop to be reaped is waiting in the country beyond the grave. And when we think what we must reap there, if we sow to the Flesh, or sow to the World,—how the awful words of Christ come in, spoken of one who did the less grossly evil, 'Thou fool!' Prudent,—and got the good of this short life by incurring incalculable loss and woe in a life that must run on for

ever! Prudent,—and used up, in three-score years and ten, *all* the 'good things' to be reached in a being that will be only beginning untold ages hence! Ah, if that be prudence, what must folly be!

So much for the general bearing and result of a wilfully sinful life. As a whole, it is one long madness. It is a systematic choice of Time in preference to Eternity. It is a systematic buying of a short and troubled span of enjoyment such as it is, by paying for it the price of endless misery. It is a deliberate choosing the finite before the infinite. It is gaining a little of the world; and flinging away the soul. But let us look closer into this matter, and regard the wilful sinner's conduct in various points of view.

My brethren, if it be true that we are placed in this world chiefly to prepare for a world to come: and if in that coming world there be no neutral ground,—not one inch of space to rest in unless in perfect

happiness or in insufferable misery: and if upon our conduct here depend the decision of the momentous question whether we are to dwell in that happiness or that misery for ever and ever: what shall we call the conduct of the man who passes through this life without one earnest endeavour to place himself in that condition in which alone (he knows) he can hope to gain that bliss and escape that woe? Is not this folly?

If it be true that the single way in which we can obtain salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer of sinners: if it be true that every deed which has not its origin in that faith, is sin; and that every step which is not taken in dependence on that Redeemer is a step towards absolute ruin: what shall we call the conduct of the man who never earnestly sees to it how that faith in that Redeemer may be obtained? Is not this conduct folly?

If it be true that a Divine Spirit is promised to

all who ask Him, to work in them that repentance towards God and that faith in Christ and that great change in the aspirations of the soul without which there is no ordinary salvation: and if it be further true that this repentance, this faith, this regeneration, cannot be, without the working of that Divine Spirit; what shall we call the conduct of the man who passes through life without one earnest prayer for that Spirit, or one anxious inquiry whether that Spirit has ever yet breathed upon his soul? Is not this folly?

If it be true that at death the wicked are turned into a state which the merciful Saviour called the outer darkness, where are weeping and wailing, the worm that never dies and the fire that is not quenched: and if it be true that this death, that cuts off all change, may arrest any mortal before to-morrow:—what shall we call the conduct of the man who is content to live on, day after day, still in that condition that if he should die, the moment of his

death would be the moment of his entering upon the final woe? Is not this folly?

If it be true that our life here bears to our life hereafter absolutely *no* proportion: if the days in the cradle be an infinitely larger part of the life of the oldest man that ever lived, than that longest life would be of the never-ending life of every man: if it be an exaggerated idea of the life on earth, to say it is our being's infancy: what shall we call the conduct of the man who lives as if his span on earth were his entire life-time? Is not this folly?

If it be true that we are helplessly in the hands of some Being Who can do with us and make of us what He will: what shall we call the conduct of the man who is content to live on in life, and to live through it, in utter heedlessness of the Nature and Purposes of that Mysterious Stranger? Is there no folly here?

If it be true that every man bears within him an

immortal soul, whose capacities and longings find here neither scope wide enough for them nor objects fit for them: what shall we call the conduct of the man who permits an endless succession of trifles to engross all his thoughts, while his mind hardly ever goes out upon those grand and dread realities that compass us about, and bear upon our eternal prospects and destiny? Is there no folly in narrowing to a point the regards of a soul that could have embraced the universe: in bending energies made for God and immortality upon things fleeting as the insects of a summer day?

If it be true that wherever you go, there is a greater Being present than any who is seen: if it be true that God is every man's most constant companion: what shall we call the conduct of him who, go where he may, quite forgets 'the Greatest Inhabitant of every place where men are living'*: and

* The phrase occurs in the first of John Foster's *Essays*.

suffers his character to take an incomparably stronger and deeper impress from his occasional intercourse with the worthless and wicked, than from the never-ceasing companionship of the Almighty? Is there no folly here?

But you will readily see that by taking a sinful and worldly life in different points of view, and by looking at the various parts and relations of it, we might swell to almost any extent the humiliating catalogue of the follies implied in it. Enough has been said to prove, beyond all question, that every deed of sin, and every life of sin, has a two-fold origin: a spring at once in the impulses of an evil heart, and in the blindness of an erring judgment. And thus, apart from that mysterious essential badness, for which sin will receive its punishment at the hand of God, we believe it is stamped with a character, often forgot, of extravagant foolishness, which makes it not only the worst thing that exists, but the

most contemptible. If a man lives in habitual transgression, or if a man holds back from accepting the salvation offered in Christ, it must be because he has made a calculation which is fearfully wrong, and arrived at a conclusion which you would think no sane creature could draw. It is because he thinks that the favour of God is a thing to be bartered away at the price of that worthless pleasure or that empty good which is to be found in sin: It is because he judges that a life of forgetfulness of God, a life wherein the Saviour is rejected, for three-score years and ten, is a thing so pleasant and desirable as to be worth the price of an eternity of woe: It is because he cares not how he burdens the Future with misery, if only he can make the Present pass lightly and gaily by: It is because he has fairly calculated that it will profit a man to gain ever so little of this world, though he lose his soul. Or, if in truth he has drawn no such inferences: if in truth he acts on no such

principles: if he verily believes that time and eternity cannot be compared, and that the happiest life on earth would be too dearly bought at the cost of ultimate perdition: does not all this only stamp him with a character of ten-fold folly? He drinks the cup, knowing it is poison: he treads the path, knowing it ends in destruction: he acknowledges it is madness to choose endless ill when offered endless good; yet he says, Endless ill for me! I know, he says, I am burdening my soul with shame and ruin: I know that this conscience, so seared and deadened now, will yet be made to quiver with intensest perception and feeling. I know that in a few years, a few days, I must go, through my own election, where is only blank despair: I know all this,—I would not be worried with expostulation on the subject: I am content it should be so!

Now this is God's truth. That is what is practically said by every man who lives on, contented to

think he has not believed in Christ. And if it be so, what words can utter the fearful foolishness that perverts his way? I know, that as far as your reason goes, you must admit all this: Oh that God's Spirit may make each one of us feel it as of ourselves we could never do! Would that all here present, old and young, were taught by that heavenly Teacher, that in sober truth, 'The fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.' The only thing in all our life on which we shall look back with entire approval on our dying bed, will be what we did, by God's kind grace, to win Christ and be found in Him. We can see already, that we have all done many foolish things; that our life has indeed been a long, sad series of errors, sins, and follies: and perhaps when we come to die, we may discern that many doings which we thought at the time showed great worldly wisdom, were in truth as foolish things as ever were done by man. In the light of

near Eternity, how vain and idle all our labours and schemings for worldly ends will seem! The fire will try our works: and very much may prove to be wood, hay, stubble. There is nothing surer than this: that the human being who goes through his years on earth without working out his salvation, will feel in his soul, looking back from the gate of the other world, Oh what a madly wasted life was mine! But there is hope yet for every one here. If there be one, who knows that to this day he has not sought the Saviour, let him bless God that the door of mercy is open yet, though it may shut so soon. And all of us, dear friends, pray more constantly to be filled with that Blessed Spirit, Who is, as God's Word tells us so significantly, the Spirit 'of power, and of love, and of A SOUND MIND!'

DISCOURSE V.

V.

*GOD KNOWS.**

'I cannot tell: God knoweth.'—2 Cor. xii. 3.

IT was St Paul said it: said it twice in writing a few lines. Likely enough he had said the like many times. For it must have been a common process of thought then, as now, to pass from thinking of our own ignorance to thinking of God's perfect knowledge. He was speaking of that wonderful event in his life, which is known as his *Rapture*. All we know of *that* we are told, very briefly, in a few verses of this chapter. The Apostle was permitted an extraordinary revelation of the better world: he saw things and heard things not to

* Glasgow Cathedral: June 29, 1873.

be told to others. But whether this were in vision or in fact, whether in the body or out of the body, he says 'I cannot tell: God knoweth.'

It is curious, how natural it is to pass, by the association of extreme contrast, from the thought of our own ignorance of anything, to the thought of God's perfect knowledge of it. How commonly the thing is said, which is said in my text! In this, people who lived long ago and far away, were even as we are now. Sometimes, indeed, the first step is dropt: is understood without being said. When a man says *God knows*, it means that he himself does not know. It is in common modes of thought like this, that we discern the identity of our race: much more than in mere tricks of outward expression. And the homeliest and least instructed man, just as much as the most cultured and elevated, is impelled to the same utterance of natural piety. Many of you remember the touching and true story, of the

poor dog that watched for many weeks by his dead master on Helvellyn. A simple shepherd, pointing out the place to a traveller, ended by saying 'God knows how the poor creature was fed all that time.' And one of the chiefest poets,* after beautifully telling of the love and fidelity of our humble fellow-creature whom a good many men would have little right to call morally an inferior animal, thus sums up:

> How nourished during that long time,
> *He* knows, Who gave that love sublime:
> And gave that strength of feeling, great
> Above all human estimate.

There is comfort, in several ways, in the reflection which my text suggests. We do not feel so beaten by some great mystery and perplexity, when we think, as we look at it, Though this beat me, and foil me, and sometimes make me very miserable,

* Wordsworth.

there is One Who understands and sees through it. We are not quite so anxious about the uncertain Future, when we think, Now, though I do not know at all what is coming to me, or to my children when I am gone, or to the Church and the world,—God knows: it is all quite plain and clear before Him at this moment. Wherefore, we thank God for this rooted bent and tendency in us, of which the text reminds us once more. It is kindly and cheering, that such is our make, that the poor weak mortal is always ready to think, however imperfectly, of the great Father above; and when made to feel his own ignorance, weakness, inability, to remember that there are all sufficiency and strength and knowledge *There*. We like that fashion of Contrast: it comes naturally between Here and There, between the Here and the Hereafter: it will bear many exemplifications and repetitions. There is no night in heaven: ah, there are many dark hours here. The

life here is short, is careworn, is sad: the endless and tearless life is *There.*

I do not need to show you how much you cannot tell. Nor will any one doubt that God knows all. Taking this as certain, What then? Several comforting reflections, I think. There are some awful ones, too. But it is not of these last that I purpose to speak. I desire to 'speak comfortably' to God's anxious people, this day. Let us meditate on the cheering and consolatory consequences from my text.

First, we do not know our own Future. We do not know what is coming to us: success in our work or failure in it; sickness in our homes or health; joy in our hearts or sorrow in them. Perhaps to some of us, this ignorance does not matter so much as concerns ourselves. Our own lot is (humanly speaking) fixed; and our own fortune made or marred: We have settled to the pace at which the rest of the

pilgrimage must be traversed, till strength fail: we have found our humble mark: we cannot rise any farther,—God grant we may not fall. And so, looking out upon the awful Future, there are many whose thoughts are rather of their children, whose career is yet to make. Those little ones you think of and care for so much: what will come of them when you are far away? Of course, if a man is a selfish, heartless brute,—some scores of miles an 'inferior animal' to the dog on Helvellyn,—he will not mind: but I trust, and believe, there is not one such here. All of you who are parents will know what was meant by the wise and loveable writer * who said that if any middle-aged man evinces undue elation of spirits, *that* will be speedily and certainly abated by suggesting the question of the future lot of his children. Now, under the great anxiety you all often feel, and under the uncertainty of the vague out-look,

* Sir Arthur Helps.

here is comfort. We do not know: but God knows. And if we are His,—and of this we have a good hope through grace,—if we trust Him, and leave it all to His guidance Whose Name is Jehovah-Jireh, —it will all be well. Trust Him, that He 'will provide:' and He will provide: 'Have faith, and you'll win through!' We do not know what may be coming; but we are sure that nothing can be coming which will be too much to bear. Great evil will be kept away from us: such evil as would crush, and break us down. We may venture, if we be Christ's children, quite confidently to say *that:* We shall not be visited with trial beyond what we can bear. The heaviest troubles will be kept away from us: and as for those of which every lot and heart must have its share, the grace will be given in proportion to the need for it: As the days, so shall the strength be. Yes, and not for yourselves only, through God's kind grace (we cleave to the belief),

will prayer and faith prove mighty: No final mischance, no mischance that will mar their eternal destiny, will befall the children of many prayers. They may wander far, but they will be led back. As for yourselves, so for those to come after you, pray, and trust, and labour. No man in his senses supposes I counsel that loathsome hypocrisy which pretends to trust God with the children's welfare, while the vile hypocrite does nothing for it himself. Do your own very best and utmost: strain every muscle in your soul and body: Then leave them, by faith and prayer, to God: and He will keep them. The little boys may grow to gray-headed men: but they will not outgrow the reach and influence of the long-departed parent's faith and prayers. They will know the weary hand, and the sad heart, and the anxious mind: but they will be brought through. They will know temptations; and have their sorrowful portion in the humiliation of human sin and folly;

but they will be brought in the end to be with you, after all the alienation of years, more nearly than in infancy, in that better country where are no more partings for the future, and where past partings are effaced.

Think, Christians, as you meditate on God's knowledge of all you do not know in that future lot before you and yours,—Think Who it is that knows: Kindest to love us, Wisest to order for us, Almighty to do all for us: and Who knows us so well,—how things affect us, and all our many fears: It is He that sees all that is coming to us, and that allows it to come. Surely this is enough for us: His will be done!

We have sometimes wished we could look into His book, and see what is written there, appointed to come to us and ours. We have sometimes wished we might see His Face, and read something of the awful Future in its expression. But it is better not.

It is His way to ask His children to trust Him. He has promised, largely, that 'all things shall work together for good to them that love Him:' Let *that* suffice. I cannot tell the details, the outs and ins, of the way before me: I do not want to know. It is enough to remember that 'Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.'

So much of our own Future. Let us go on to think that we do not know the Future of the Race, and the Church, and Christianity. We are all, I doubt not, oftentimes very anxious about these. Those in these days must sometimes bear a heavy burden, who have any measure of unselfishness, and public spirit; and who love the old Institutions and the old Beliefs which are attacked. We cannot certainly say how it may be appointed to go with the Church: meaning not the Catholic Church, but the national establishment which represents it in this

nation. I am not an alarmist: and I do not profess to stand in immediate fear: but I see how the tide appears to be setting: and it will not content me, for one, as I think of the sturdy old institution which amid many shortcomings, and plundered of her patrimony (which was the patrimony of the poor) by a grasping and dishonest aristocracy at the Reformation, has yet for three centuries made Scotland the most independent and enlightened country in the world;—it will not content me to think that she will last my day. Rather let it be the prayer of every churchman that for ages to come, improved and vivified wherever that be needful,—adding to sound truth and faithful labour all the beauty of holiness, all the reverence and sweetness which beyond question have hitherto been deficient,—she may render priceless service to the nation as from the days of brave and honest and unbribeable Knox till now. But though such be our prayer, we are not by any

means sure it will be granted. Though such be our theory of what would be best for our country in the future, it may be merely the result of early training and prepossession: and God may have other plans. And it is not impossible that the heavy task may await us of breaking free from old convictions that are woven into our very being; or at the least, we may have to bear the seeing these cast aside as worn-out lumber by men who have caught the spirit of the age. Well, we cannot tell: but God knows. And not merely does God know what is coming; but God has appointed it,—and so, in some sense, has approved it: If we could, indeed, but be sure of this last, that He *has* approved it! For we cannot read the past history of either Church or World, and then accept the event as the infallible exponent of what God approves. God may in some sense will,—that is, may permit men to will and to carry out,—what He can in no sense be fairly said to approve. But

this is sure; that His kingdom will come: and if it be not appointed to be brought by our little machinery,—which we think the best,—then it will be brought in some other way. If we be not permitted the great reward of seeing God's work prosper with us through our work,—but rather be appointed the sore trial of spending and being spent in a falling cause,—enough for us if God's great work be done, if not by us then by others. 'He must increase, but we must decrease!' Only let poor human souls be enlightened and saved and comforted: Only let the darkest den of Glasgow be cheered by gospel light, and every Scottish soul know Christ and the power of His resurrection! Would God the dear old Church might do it: but enough if it be done at all!

So, too, with the Future of the Race: When we think that God knows it, we are enabled to leave it, not without confidence, in His Hand. On the whole,

the Race is bettering: beyond all doubt, it is, almost everywhere, inconceivably better than it once was. And in the long Future, if we believe in God at all, we must believe that mankind will be, in all respects, growing better by far. Not that this gives us any assurance of the continued prosperity of our own country. Though the tide advance on the whole, it may be receding at this point and that. It has pleased God to permit uttermost ruin and degradation to overwhelm individual nations already: lands, once enlightened and civilized, have been allowed to go back to darkness and barbarism: and periods of extravagant profusion and abject want side by side,—periods of wide-spread moral deterioration and lack of honesty,—periods of sham and shoddy in all ranks,—are full of awful omen. The deep truth of the old axiom has been proved by much experience, that Righteousness exalteth a nation,—taking righteousness for no more than downright honesty between

man and man. Where *that* fails, ruin is near: unless God in mercy command repentance and reformation. But there is not time to go into this matter now: it is too large, and too sad. As for Christianity, if we have in ourselves the assurance of its truth, and if we believe what God's Word says of its Future, we shall not be greatly afraid, even in the presence of certain strong currents of thought, whose acceptance among many of those who should be the best-instructed is indeed portentous. The questionings as to the power of Prayer: The Materialism which is waxing arrogant as it grows fashionable: The calm, settled purpose to identify man in nature and in destiny with the brute that perishes: The main wonder I feel in the presence of these, is of how the men that teach them can manage to live at all, and do not hasten to get back into the nothingness which they hold to be our end and original: how, if they had indeed ascertained that awful nega-

tion, they did not rather hide it from the Race it could but degrade and make wretched; and so let man cheer himself a little under the load of life by the hope of another, even if it were never to be,—and by the teachings and consolations of the cross, even if these were fond delusion!

But, even amid many things of which I do not now speak, I have no fear at all for the Future of our holy faith. In God's way, and God's time, *that* shall prevail. Purged of all accretion of human error, pure Gospel truth in some happy day will fill every soul from the rising to the setting sun. We put away, here, resolutely, all faithless fears and misgivings. God knows all: God orders all: All will be well. We hear talk of Optimism: which means, briefly said, the creed that All is for the Best. Why, every Christian must be an Optimist: that is, must cleave to the belief that All things work together for good, if not for the best: must cleave to that belief

sometimes with a sinking heart and a bewildered head, all but despairing. Job was an Optimist when he said, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him!' St Paul, pierced and humbled by the thorn in the flesh, was an Optimist when he said, 'Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.' It follows, assuredly, from the fact that there is a God Who knows and orders all, that All shall be well. If there were not a God Who knows and orders all, it were better we had never been born: The sublime despair of the old Greek dramatist* would be right,—'Not to be, is best of all.' I do not wonder that he who loses the living belief in an all-knowing and all-ordering God should be Pessimist in utter bewilderment and desperation. Look round this world: how wrong everything sometimes seems: What sin and misery everywhere! 'The whole creation groaneth

* Sophocles: *Œdipus Coloneus.*

and travaileth in pain together until now.' How can good be brought out of that irremediable evil: How can a world that is all wrong and out of joint be set right and got in train again? We cannot tell; but God knoweth. We trust His wisdom and power for the ultimate issue: Meanwhile, we trust His sure word. Our Redeemer shall see of the travail of His soul, in a ransomed world, *and be satisfied:* How much is assured in that word! As for the outcome of all His Agony and Death, He will not be satisfied in the day of small things. All that is now amiss, lesser and greater together, shall yet be made right for evermore. Meanwhile we may read it told, with a sorrowful air of triumph, that it is in ignorant districts of our own country that Christianity retains its influence: that it is *there* the churches are 'filled as in the middle ages:' that the thoughtful and cultivated are the sceptical: that old means of grace, prized in simpler times, are held cheap by the wise now.

It is not true, to the measure we are often told. But if it were, it will all be well again in the better day when Christ's kingdom shall come; and sin and misery go.

> And the Temple shall be built,
> And filled as it was of yore:
> And the burden be lift from the heart of the world,
> And the nations all adore!

There is a third application,—the last,—which I wish to make of the text, and of what it suggests: It is in regard to the inscrutable mysteries by which we are surrounded, and met everywhere, in this life. All the manifold and awful questions to which we can see no answer, are plain to Him. All those religious difficulties; speculative difficulties; difficulties how we are to think about God, and ourselves, and this world, and all the way in which this world goes, and the unseen world; all those difficulties which have perplexed the wit and wrung the heart of the best of the Race in all ages, are no difficulties at all

to our heavenly Father. All that we cannot tell He knoweth. I am not going to expatiate on these mysteries, or even to attempt to number them: It may suffice just to name the Existence of Evil as the chiefest and in some sense the all-including example of what is meant. And I venture to say that for all save some very exceptional mind here and there,—some mind gifted with a marvellous power of seeing deeper into things than has heretofore been seen, and so of showing to everybody of commonplace folk what but for him would have been discerned by nobody among them,—I say that for all save such an exceptive mind, the text shows the line of peace and safety, in respect of such awful and crushing perplexity. 'I cannot tell: God knoweth:' after unutterable effort and suffering you will not have got an inch farther on: You had better, far better, not bruise head and heart seeking to pierce into the impenetrable granite. Look as long as you will, no

ordinary eyes will ever see farther into a stone. And I venture to say yet more: The healthful mind, humbly aware of its own little power, and simply trusting God with a firm faith, is able to rest quite undisturbed in the presence of an inscrutable mystery: The inscrutable mystery disquiets it not at all. The healthful mind, when it sees quite plainly that some mysterious question is beyond its comprehension, quite contentedly leaves it alone. It is just as foolish to tax mental strength to do what it cannot, as to tax bodily. When you see a great boulder weighing many tons, you do not go and vex yourself in trying to lift it: you know you cannot: you make up your mind that to move it is beyond your strength; and you do not try. Should we not do the like, intellectually? Frankly accept what is the condition of our being? And say cheerfully, and with firm faith, what a far wiser and deeper thinker said, in the presence of an unanswer-

able question, — 'I cannot tell: God knoweth!'

There are minds that run on such mysteries: minds (it may be) so gifted that by long meditation they may be able to help humbler understandings to unravel these: perhaps only morbid minds that never will find any end to their questionings, 'in wandering mazes lost;' themselves bewildered, and unfitted for the practical work of life. Such may fitly take for their own that beautiful prayer *Against Inquisitive and Perplexing Thoughts* which was prepared and used by one concerning whom it may be said, with no disrespect to any Christian congregation, that he was beyond comparison a deeper and weightier thinker than almost any of its number: I mean the great and good Samuel Johnson. Let us listen to it, and join in it.

'O Lord, my Maker and Protector, Who hast graciously sent me into this world to work out my salvation, enable me to drive from me all such un-

quiet and perplexing thoughts as may mislead or hinder me in the practice of those duties which Thou hast required. When I behold the works of Thy hands, and consider the course of Thy providence, give me grace always to remember that Thy thoughts are not my thoughts, nor Thy ways my ways. And while it shall please Thee to continue me in this world, where much is to be done, and little to be known, teach me by Thy Holy Spirit, to withdraw my mind from unprofitable and dangerous inquiries, from difficulties vainly curious, and doubts impossible to be solved. Let me rejoice in the light which Thou hast imparted: let me serve Thee with active zeal and humble confidence; and wait with patient expectation for the time in which the soul which Thou receivest shall be satisfied with knowledge. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'

Such was the good man's prayer. I might not

venture to add to it 'And let all the people say Amen.' But I do venture to add to it, Let nine hundred and ninety-nine in every thousand say even so!

One word, one last word, to-day. To each disciple, amid all ignorance, and all perplexity, our Blessed Redeemer says, as He said heretofore:

'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.'

DISCOURSE VI.

VI.

*THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.**

'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.'—
PSALM XCVI. 9.

I HAVE no scruple, honoured as I have been by the invitation of the Committee which has cared for the restoration of this venerable Cathedral Church, to preach to you this evening,—I have no scruple in turning aside from the ordinary range of the topics which form, and fitly form, the burden of the faithful preacher's message, to think of matters, most worthy of occasional discussion in a discourse to be spoken from the pulpit, which the very look of the restored and beautified sanctuary presses this evening upon my mind and yours. With the serious remem-

* Preached in the Cathedral Church of St Giles, Edinburgh, on the evening of Sunday, June 1, 1873.

brance that the house of God in which we are met is a holy as well as now a beautiful place: amid the thronging associations of the ages through which, in the most diverse ways, Christian people who are gone have here worshipped God: with the earnest prayer for the sensible presence of that Blessed Spirit without whom no ritual, however ornate or however simple, can be acceptable worship; I desire to lead you to think for a little while of the point at which we stand in the National Church of this country in the respect of form and order in the public worship of God: doing this, as I trust, in a fashion which, not concealing my own strong prepossessions and convictions, may tend to conciliate and not to offend good Christian folk who think and feel quite differently: as indeed some few of my most esteemed friends do.

No Scotchman who has lived to middle age can look round this choir; can remark its decorous arrangements, so familiar to some of us elsewhere

though so rare here; can think of the type of worship (varied, indeed, only in non-essential details) which has been adopted since the re-opening of the cleansed and beautified structure, now retrieved from the disgrace of squalor and gloom that had come through years of neglect and ignorance: without feeling, as truly we are made to feel in many other ways and places, what a change has passed and is passing on the Scottish mind in the regard of Externals in the public service of God. The day was, wherein a confused but firmly-held belief prevailed, that the inspired declaration that God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth was a declaration on the side of a severe simplicity in worship: I am sure you have heard the ever-memorable saying of our Blessed Redeemer quoted in that sense. Now, we know better. We know (a glance might always have shown it) that the famous text simply says that worship must be sincere and hearty; but adds not

one syllable as to what kind of worship is likeliest to be so. Under the sublime vault of Westminster: amid the glories and memories of Canterbury: in the inexpressible loveliness of Wells with its environment of deep southern green and the enchantment of Glastonbury and Avalon; that text might be preached from in as good faith as in the homeliest Scotch country church amid its great trees and green graves this June. Dear to us, through the remembrances of our fathers and mothers gone, — through the whispering memories, now in these careworn days when we are wearying in the pilgrimage, of bright summer Sundays when we went to church as little children, and watched, the long sermon through, the swaying branches through the opened windows with little brothers and sisters lost in the growth of years: dear to our Scotch hearts may be the humble sanctuary with its hearty psalms, as perhaps no grand cathedral that appeals to the calm æsthetic

appreciation of after-life can ever be. But we will not, ignorantly and insolently, presume to say that our way is absolutely, and before God, the better way. It is the better for us, because it suits us and has grown dear to us: That which suits others is the better for them. And we believe, and are sure, that amid what surroundings soever, gorgeous or severe, man heartily worships God through His Son by His Spirit, with that worship God is well-pleased.

Whoever is moderately read in the history of the Mediæval Church in Scotland will never wonder that the Reformation from it should have been decisive, and should have gone far. The pre-Reformation Church was so utterly corrupt through and through; it was so bitterly and infamously bad, both in its system and its personnel; that our Reformers thought they could not get too far away from it; and Presbytery, both in government and worship, was a vehement re-action against Popery. And

though it has been made most plain that it was not Knox and his fellow-labourers who ruined our great churches; though that harm befell us through the parsimony and dishonesty of those who shammed great reforming zeal that they might lay hands on the Church's patrimony, which was the patrimony of the poor: though our barn-like places of worship are such mainly to the shame of the ancestors of some of those who now upbraid the Church of Scotland for her bare sanctuaries, and sever themselves for reasons often contemptible and always unpatriotic from the worship of the vast majority of their countrymen; and though it has been made most certain, too, that not the national Presbyterianism of the North, but the imported and alien Puritanism of the South has to answer for that in our worship which these latter years have been mending: yet, in practical fact, it is to be frankly admitted that till within the memory of those who are hardly yet old, all attention to out-

ward detail in our worship—all external reverence—all regard to what may without perversion of Scripture be called the visible beauty of holiness and devotion—was looked at with disfavour. As too much form was admitted to be bad; as resting in the form to the forgetfulness of the spirit was admitted to be unchristian; the tendency was to approach as nearly as might be to having no form at all. Yet I will not fail to testify, from my own experience, that an extreme, hard to defend in theory, did oftentimes in practice work marvellously well. For, after all, the warmest lover of the pointed arch, the storied window, the long-drawn aisle, will admit that the grand thing about a church is the living congregation: and there are those who know that in the ugliest building ever called a church even here,—still the earnest multitude, the rude but soul-sent praise, the momently-adapted prayer that was made for just that time and place and people, the Gospel-sermon giving

the whole Gospel to dying men who might never hear it more, and spoken with the strange warmth so rigorously expected amid a hard-headed and undemonstrative race, in all other things so cool and unimpassioned and little likely to be swept away by the display of feeling; and then the seldom-coming communion with its earnestly marked deviations from the order of common Sundays; the white-headed elders, truly ensamples to the flock; the breathless silence as the sacred symbols passed from hand to hand, the withered face of age and the fresh features of youth reverently bowed down upon the Table, holy if there be such a thing in Christendom, —the Saviour's Presence, not in the hands but in the heart,—a Real Presence if there be reality on this side of time,—calming with a wondrous calm, lifting up the heart to a blessed elevation, high above care and doubt and sin and temptation as mid-day sun above summer sea;—I say before God there are

those who know that such things have made sinful souls, yet surely pardoned and somewhat sanctified, feel as near heaven as they can ever feel on earth. I recall, fondly and tenderly, even in this grand presence,—you will pardon it in a son of the manse,—the Communion Sunday evenings of the West when I was a boy: the great multitude gathered so decorously,—if ever there was indecorum I never saw it,—under the blue dome that was stretched out by no mortal architect,—under the setting sun of July: the air sweet with the fragrance of the clover, borne in by the warm summer breeze: the mossy headstones and the little swelling graves; and then the great psalm rising up to Christ in strains never to be exceeded, at least to a Scottish ear and heart, anywhere in all this world. Surely, surely, if ever there were hearty and acceptable worship upon earth, you had it there!

You will believe that it is in no grudging spirit I

admit the charm there used to be about our old Scottish worship, specially amid rural scenes and people: it never had to me that singular fascination amid the streets and congregations of the city: and you will receive my testimony as given in the simpler good faith for what I have said, when I now say that for better for worse the Scottish nation has in great measure grown away from that old worship with its homely pathos, and looks for other things. Not even in Ayrshire will you now find the ancient tent-preaching; nor the gathering, at the infrequent communion, of the Christian-folk and the Christian ministers of half-a-dozen neighbouring parishes, as it used to be. And as a trimness has overspread society, effacing the quaint characteristics and sharp corners of old days, so has the desire grown strong for more decorous and impressive places of worship than have heretofore been common; and for greater propriety and dignity in the forms and arrangements.

of the worship itself. There has gradually developed itself the conviction that it is not a good reason for irreverently sitting down to sing God's praise, merely that in so doing we are able to reflect that we are doing the opposite of what has been done by most Christian people in most places at most times. I do not waste time in trying to explain the rationale of the decided change in taste and liking. It seems to be the rule of God's Providence, that if two civilizations are set side by side, the more advanced civilization shall leaven the less advanced: If two systems are set down close together, the system implying the higher culture shall slowly but surely give tone to the other: and surely as the Anglican ritual grows familiar to those brought up in the Scotch, so surely, without any mere aping of ways markedly different from our own, without any essential departure from our own type of common worship, will certain of the beautiful characteristics of that mel-

lower southern ceremonial commend themselves to us as suggestive of respects in which our worship may be made more reverent, orderly, and attractive to high and low. The English training which many of us give our children has familiarized no inconsiderable number of the youth of our National Church with the Anglican ritual and liturgy at the most impressionable season of their life: and modern facilities of travel have made all educated Scotch men and women as well acquainted with that worship as with their own. Sure as that comes to be, the two types will be compared: and unless we strive to make our worship ever more reverent in its outward surroundings; our prayers more prayerful and less sermonizing; our praise more worthy of the name of God's praise; the comparison will be to our disadvantage. I put aside the contemptible instinct of conformity to fashion: if that has withdrawn any from the Church of their fathers, they never were worth keep-

ing,—let them go! But there is something at work that is far deeper and far more respectable than that. There is a real deep craving—and who can condemn it?—after a beauty of holiness, a solemnity of order and demeanour, which have hitherto been, in many places, sadly lacking. And while it is admitted,—no competent judge could help admitting it,—that our average standard of preaching is markedly superior, in power, interest, and thoroughness of workmanship, to the average standard of preaching in the other National Church of Britain,—it is as sure as anything can be,—it is as sure as the law of growth or of gravitation,—that as our congregations grow in intelligence and culture,—as the distance between the congregation and the preacher lessens, reaches zero, gets to be on the wrong side of the account,—our congregations will be growingly impatient of being left helplessly in the power of the preacher for the expression of their needs and desires and sorrows

and experiences in prayer. Do not fancy I am pleading for an authorized liturgy; though I have heard the ablest, wisest, and devoutest of our clergy do so: but I am pleading for a clergy mightily lifted up in spirituality and learning and culture: and for prayers diligently gathered from the Universal Church's rich stores of devout thought and expression: coming of abundant study; and themselves the outcome of many earnest prayers. Nor do I hold myself other than one of the most loyal and devoted sons of the Church of my fathers, when I say that worshipping at altars which are not hers (because in a country which is not hers), I cannot but gather thoughts and suggestions to which (as I think and am sure) my honoured fathers and brethren in the ministry might well give heed. For who that has paced the echoing aisles of the sublime Minsters of the South and reverently joined in a worship worthy of them: grown familiar (as are most of us)

with pealing organ and white-robed choristers,—with the chanted psalm, and the melodious prayers with their all-but-inspired felicity, beauty, and majesty: but has turned away with the lingering thought, Might not the dear old Church, keeping still that Presbyterian government which we believe to be founded on the Word of God and agreeable thereto, and specially adapted to the independent, unsubservient, unhierarchic Scottish race,—and keeping, too, in the main, the type of worship which has grown familiar,—not innovating, but going back towards what the fathers of our Church intended,—not breaking at all with old traditions dear to the nation's heart,—yet gain and keep more of the beauty of holiness in things outward: more of that reverence, seemliness, and order, which befit the sinful human creature in the awful though kindly presence of the beloved Redeemer who yet is God Almighty: which befit the human worshipper whom

the grateful overflowing heart within him impels to offer to his Saviour his very utmost and best!

And thus desiring that worship were made more of: that praise and prayer be emphasized, and not (as they have been) thrust as into a corner in what after all is essentially the house of prayer: that the reading of God's plain and powerful Word had its due place (it has it now, but you know that for many a year it had no place at all); we never dream of depreciating the preaching of the Gospel,—of degrading from its own rightful dignity the sermon,—proverbial indeed on irreverent lips and irreverent pages, but oftentimes owned and blest of the Divine Spirit to convert and console. Least of all, let me say it earnestly and solemnly, do we seek any deviation, the very slightest or smallest, from the old doctrines of the Cross in whose faith our fathers died. I stand here as one of many who, ever mindful of the vows of our ordination day and ever loyal to

them, to maintain the purity and simplicity of the worship of this National Church, would yet seek, within the liberty these vows permit us, to make our worship more worthy and attractive than often heretofore: but with all that, quite content with our old doctrinal standards; asking no change on these; believing as our fathers believed, who were better men; and sure that if there be hard things in our creeds, it is because they are in God's Word too;—ay, and in the nature of things, not to be escaped or evaded in this state of being. I should lament, indeed, if the chanted psalm, and the grand *Te Deum* in whose use we are drawn closer to Catholic Christendom,—if the knee bowed in prayer, and the solemn hush when the parting blessing is over,—should ever become suspect things through being associated with peculiar and exceptional doctrinal teaching, with which they have absolutely no link at all.

Neither, in our modest endeavours after a more

reverent and cultured ritual, are there involved (what are called) sacerdotal or sacramental views. We endeavour after *that*, because it is in itself a fit and seemly thing that God's worship be surrounded by reasonable outward circumstances of dignity and solemnity: because it is right to do all we can, within legitimate limits, to make God's house and worship attractive: to make these such that there shall be nothing about either to jar on the right mood of mind and heart with which we should pray to wait upon them. We would not have it in the power of even the most regardless to plead as excuse for absence from church, that really the whole service when he last was there was an offence against taste and feeling,—was so rude, and uninteresting, and unworthy of what it claimed to be, that there was no inducement to go back again but many reasons to stop away. We hold it a fit end,—only one among many fit ends, some of them doubtless

more vital,—that Christian congregations be enabled to worship not in dreariness and squalor, but in all the beauty of holiness: remembering, too, that the Christian Church did not begin at the Reformation: that then it was only that she was purified from accretion of human error; and that in all which was good and beautiful in the ancient Church we as much as any have our part. But, having said so much, I am not ashamed to add that I hold by our venerable standards, as in everything else, so in their teaching as to Sacraments and Orders: and I venture to say that such as go *there* for our Church's doctrine will find it anything but low: will find our Church's claims are strong and explicit. The Sacraments do not mean nothing. The Christian ministry has its authority and grace. Would that Christian people and Christian ministers lived worthier of their privileges and calling!

Some years since there was somewhat of an un-

easy feeling in various estimable quarters, that though the New Testament do not in any way declare against even an ornate and stately worship,—far more ornate than any man among us has ever dreamt of,—yet that at least the clergy of the National Church were precluded from suggesting or adopting any change whatever by their ordination vows. And charges of unfaithfulness to these were cast abroad. I have even heard the word *perjury* applied with much zeal if with small charity. Very little consideration of the terms and meaning of those vows sufficed to show that they do not in any way apply to the improvements desired; and no reasonable human being will now bring charges of faithlessness to them. And when I think how many of our very best and devoutest ministers and elders have in their churches that more dignified ritual; when I think of the hearty West, the centre of so great a part of the Church's energy and spirituality and wisdom,—

where hardly is a new place of worship opened that has not all you see here: when I remember that my revered father, as faithful and worthy a minister as ever stood in troubles by the Burning Bush, had in his church and left in it the organ and all that comes with it: I say, Be my soul with such, here and hereafter! And as for the ignorant and malignant accusations of broken vows and the like,—still sometimes to be heard,—I fling them aside not with indignation but with contempt.

Does it need to be said that no wise minister would thrust improvement in ritual on an unwilling people; or that changes, however much for the better, should not be pressed until the congregation is substantially unanimous in desiring them? Much as I enjoy and approve all I see here, strongly as I hold it is all within the liberty the National Church permits to her faithful sons, I never would urge these things upon those who in an ill-informed con-

scientiousness object to them. If the rich window, with its solemn light, and the long-drawn aisle; if the sacred organ, and the chanted psalm, and the soul-uplifting anthem (which are such helps to some); be hindrances to the devotion of the flock, in God's name let them be! But where an enlightened and cultured taste demands all these, and more; and where patient tact has borne with opposition till it has melted away; let us be thankful that the law and usage of the Church are now so read as to suffer us to have them and enjoy them.

And in all this there is no going down to a lower level of spiritual discernment and life. We are merely opening our eyes to facts in human nature. There is no looking back to Sodom; there is simply the exercise of common sense. Why should we go and deliberately set ourselves to worship at a disadvantage? Is it not all quite right to hope and pray for pleasant weather on the communion Sunday,

that physical discomfort may not destroy or abate the enjoyment of spiritual privilege? And to a multitude of men and women, truly desirous to worship God, the graceless irreverence and ugliness in too many places characteristic of our worship, are as grievous a hindrance to devotion, are as jarringly destructive of the peaceful devotion and calm of holy communion, as any physical discomfort or bodily pain. Within my own knowledge, they have driven from the National Church those whom she could ill spare. You may be angry with yourself that you are so clogged and distracted by these miserable externalities: you may confess it in your evening prayers as a sin: but unless you could get another nervous system, you never will wholly rise above these influences while your soul dwells in the flesh. Half-material as we are,—for it takes soul and body together to make the human being both here and in the glorified state,—profoundly affected in our spirit-

ual experience by material surroundings, often affecting us for the worse: whensoever we can make a reprisal on the hostile territory,—and get material surroundings and influences to calm the spirit and lift up the heart,—in God's name let us take that help and be thankful.

There is much more I had thought to say and should wish to say: but not the least helpful rule of our better ritual is that which says that the sermon shall be short. You know the purpose towards which the contributions of the congregation are besought. All that you can be asked to give will be but a drop in the stream towards the heavy cost of this fair and truthful restoration: but it will be given with a willing mind. Nor do I fear that, pleading for what I have pleaded for under this roof to-night, I have said what would go against the grain with the strongest and perhaps the greatest man who was used to preach here. The mighty Knox, with his hard words but

his true and kind heart, knew human nature better than to blame the plan to rule it by yielding to it: to make the best of the weak and warped material with which we have to deal. I am less clear that my sermon would have pleased the bearer of another name indissolubly associated with this choir: but for *that* I care not at all. It suffices, that the ancient Cathedral of this beautiful and famous city has, at least in part, been made worthier of surroundings all but unrivalled: that it can no longer be, as it used to be, the byeword of the passing stranger: that it has been fitted to be, as we may hope to see it, the home of lonely hearts, the shelter of devout hearts; the place of daily worship, where, in the larger truth, 'prayer is wont to be made!'

THE END.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY . .	1	INDIA AND THE EAST	19
VOYAGES AND TRAVEL . . .	5	BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG, &c. .	21
SCIENCE	7	POETRY	24
ESSAYS, LECTURES, AND COLLECTED PAPERS	12	FICTION	26
MILITARY WORKS	15	THEOLOGICAL	31
		CORNHILL LIBRARY OF FICTION	36

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